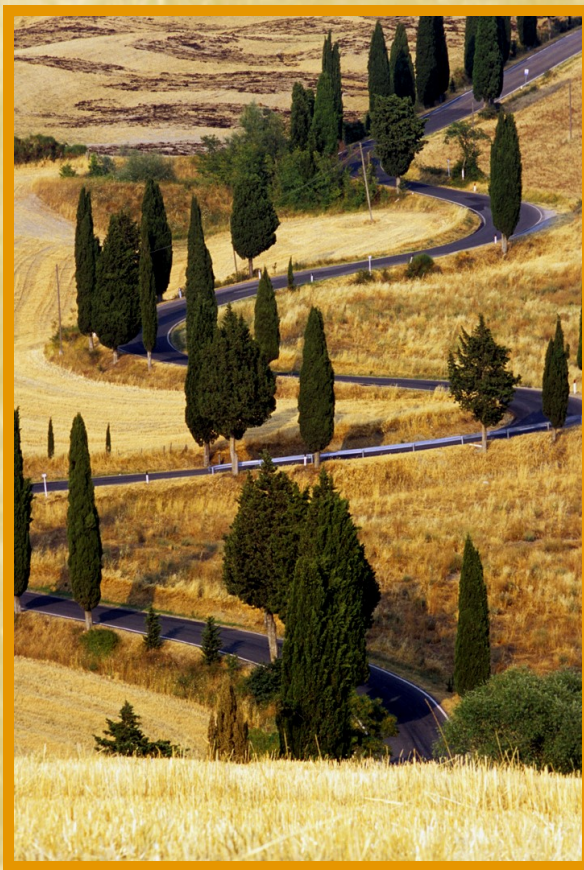


The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification

Part Two



Walter Marshall

The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification

Walter Marshall

Contents

Direction 3.....	1
Direction 4.....	13
Direction 5.....	25

Direction 3

The way to get holy Endowments and Qualifications necessary to frame and enable us for the immediate practice of the law, is to receive them out of the Fullness of Christ, by fellowship with him; and that we may have this Fellowship, we must be in Christ, and have Christ himself in us, by a mystical Union with him.

Explication

Here, as much as any where, we have great cause to acknowledge with the apostle, that, “*without controversy great is the mystery of godliness*” even so great, that it could not have entered into *the heart of man to conceive of it, if God had not made it known*, in the gospel, by supernatural revelation. Yea, though it be revealed clearly in the Holy Scriptures, yet the natural man hath not eyes to see it there, for it is foolishness to him; and, if God express it ever so plainly and properly, he will think that God is speaking riddles and parables. And I doubt not but it is still a riddle and parable, even to many truly godly, that have received a holy nature in this way; for the apostles themselves had not the saving benefit of it, before the comforter discovered it clearly to them (John 14:20). And they walked in Christ, as the way to the Father, before they clearly knew him to be the way (John 14:5). And the best of us know it but in part, and must wait for a perfect knowledge of it in another world.

One great mystery is, that the holy frame and disposition whereby our souls are furnished and enabled for immediate practice of the law, must be obtained *by receiving it out of Christ’s fulness*, as a thing already prepared and brought to an existence for us in Christ, and treasured up in him; and that as we are justified by a righteousness wrought out in Christ, and imputed to us; so we are sanctified by such a holy frame and qualifications as are first

wrought out and completed in Christ for us, and then imputed to us. And as our natural corruption was produced originally in the first Adam, and propagated from him to us; so, our new nature and holiness is first produced in Christ, and derived from him to us, or as it were propagated. So that we are not all to work together with Christ, in making or producing that holy frame in us, but only to take it to ourselves, and use it in our holy practice, as made ready to our hands. Thus we have fellowship with Christ, in receiving that holy frame of spirit that was originally in him: for fellowship is, when several persons have the same thing in common (1 John 1:1-3). This mystery is so great, that notwithstanding all the light of the gospel, we commonly think that we must get a holy frame by producing it anew in ourselves, and by forming and working it out of our own hearts. Therefore many that are seriously devout, take a great deal of pains to mortify their corrupt nature, and beget an holy frame of heart in themselves, by striving earnestly to master their sinful lusts, and by pressing vehemently upon their hearts many motives to godliness, labouring importunately to squeeze good qualifications out of them, as oil out of a flint. They account, that though they be justified by a righteousness wrought out by Christ, yet they must be sanctified by a holiness wrought out by themselves. And though out of humility, they are willing to call it *infused grace*, yet they think they must get the infusion of it by the same manner of working, as if it were wholly acquired by their own endeavours. On this account they acknowledge the entrance into a gaudy life to be harsh and unpleasing, because it costs so much struggling with their own hearts and affections, to new frame them. If they knew that this way of entrance is not only harsh and unpleasant, but altogether impossible; and that the true way of mortifying sin, and quickening themselves to holiness, is by receiving a new nature out of the fulness of Christ; and that we do no more to the production of a new nature, than of original sin, though we do more to the reception of it; if they knew this, they might save themselves many a bitter agony, and a great deal of mis-spent burdensome labour, and employ their endeavours to enter in at the strait gate, in such a way as would be more pleasant and successful.

Another great mystery in the way of sanctification, is, the glorious manner of our *fellowship with Christ*, in receiving a holy frame of

heart from him. It is by our being in Christ, and having Christ himself in us; and that not merely by this universal presence as he is God, but by such a close union, as that we are *one spirit* and *one flesh* with him; which is a privilege peculiar to those that are truly sanctified. I may well call this a *mystical union*, because the apostle calleth it a *great mystery*, is an epistle full of mysteries (Eph. 5:32); intimating, that it is eminently great above many other mysteries. It is one of the three mystical unions that are the chief mysteries in religion. The other two are, the union of the Trinity of Persons in one Godhead, and the union of the divine and human natures in one Person, Jesus Christ, God and man. Though we cannot frame an exact idea of the manner of any of these three unions in our imaginations, because the depth of these mysteries is beyond our comprehension; yet we have cause to believe them all, because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are a necessary foundation for other points of Christian doctrine. Particularly, this union between Christ and believers, is plain in several places of scripture, affirming that Christ is, and *dwelleth in believers, and they in him* (John 6:56; 14:20); and that they are so joined together as to become *one spirit* (1 Cor. 6:17); and that believers are *members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and they two, Christ and the church, are one flesh* (Eph. 5:30, 31).

Furthermore, this union is illustrated in Scripture by various resemblances, which would be very much unlike the things which they are made use of to resemble, and would rather seem to beguile us by obscuring the truth, than instruct us by illustrating of it, if there were no true proper union between Christ and believers. It is resembled by the union between *God the Father* and *Christ* (John 14:20; 17:21-23); between the *vine* and its *branches* (John 15:4, 5); between the *head* and *body* (Eph. 1:22, 23); between *bread* and the *eater* (John 6:51, 53, 54). It is not only *resembled*, but *sealed in the Lord's supper*; where neither the Popish transubstantiation, nor the Lutherans consubstantiation, nor the Protestants spiritual presence of Christ's body and blood, to the true receivers, can stand without it. And if we can imagine that Christ's body and blood are not truly eaten and drank by believers, either spiritually or corporally, we shall make the bread and wine joined with the words of institution, not only naked signs, but such signs as are much more apt to breed

false notions in us, than to establish us in the truth. And there is nothing in this union so impossible, or repugnant to reason, as may force us to depart from the plain and familiar sense of those scriptures that express and illustrate it. Though Christ be in heaven, and we an earth, yet he can join our souls and bodies to his at such a distance, without any substantial change of either, by the same infinite Spirit dwelling in him and us; and so our flesh will become his, when it is quickened by his Spirit, and his flesh ours, as truly as if we did eat his flesh and drink his blood; and he will be in us himself by his Spirit, who is one with him, and who can unite more closely to Christ than any material substance can do, or who can make a more close and intimate union between Christ and us. And it will not follow from hence, that a believer is one person with Christ, any more than that Christ is one person with the Father, by that great mystical union. Neither will a believer be hereby made God, but only the temple of God, as Christ's body and soul are; and the Spirit's lively instrument, rather than the principal cause. Neither will a believer be necessarily perfect in holiness hereby; or Christ made a sinner: for Christ knoweth how to dwell in believers by certain measures and degrees, and to make them holy so far only as he dwelleth in them. And though this union seem too high a preferment for such unworthy creatures as we are, yet, considering the preciousness of the blood of God, whereby we are redeemed, we should dishonour God, if we should not expect a miraculous advancement to the highest dignity that creatures are capable of, through the merits of that blood. Neither is there any thing in this union, contrary to the judgment of sense, because the bond of the union being spiritual, falleth not at all under the judgment of sense.

Several learned men of late acknowledge no other union between Christ and believers, than such as persons or things wholly separated, may have by their mutual relations to each other; and accordingly they interpret the places of Scripture that speak of this union. When Christ is *called the head of the church*, they account, that a political head or governor is the thing meant. When Christ is said to be *in his people*, and *they in him*, they think that the proper meaning is, that Christ's law, doctrine, grace, salvation, or that godliness is in them, and embraced by them: so that Christ here must not be taken for Christ himself, but for some other thing wrought in

them by Christ. When Christ and believers are said to be *one spirit*, and *one flesh*, they understand it of the agreement of their minds and affections: as if the greatest of the mystery of this union, mentioned (Eph. 5:32) consisted rather in a harsh trope [figure of speech], or a dark improper expression, than in the depth and abstruseness of the thing itself; and if Christ and his apostles had affected obscure intricate expressions, when they speak to the church of things very plain, and easy to be understood. Thus that great mystery, *the union of believers with Christ himself*, which is the glory of the church, and hath been highly owned formerly, both by ancient fathers and many eminent protestant divines, particularly writers concerning the doctrine of the Lord's supper, and by a very general consent of the church in many ages, is now exploded out of the new model of divinity. The reason of exploding it, as I judge in charity, is not, because of our learned refiners of divinity think themselves less able to defend it, than the other two mysterious unions, and to silence the objections of those proud sophisters, that will not believe what they cannot comprehend; but rather, because they account it to be one of the sinews of antinomianism, that lay unobserved in the former usual doctrine; that it tendeth to puff up men with a persuasion, that they are justified and have eternal life in them already, and that they need not depend any longer upon their uncertain performances of the condition of sincere obedience for salvation: whereby they account the very foundation of a holy practice to be subverted. But the wisdom of God hath laid another manner of foundation for a holy practice than they imagine, of which this union (which the builders refuse) is a principal stone, next to the head of the corner. And in opposition to their corrupt glosses upon the Scriptures that prove it, I assert, that our *union with Christ* is the cause of our subjection to Christ as a political head in all things, and of the abiding of his law, doctrine, grace, salvation and all godliness in us, and of our agreement with him in our mind and affections; and therefore it cannot be altogether the same thing with them. And this assertion is useful for a better understanding of the excellency of this union. It is not a privilege procured by our sincere obedience and holiness, as some may imagine, or a reward of good works, reserved for us in another world; but it is a privilege bestowed upon believers in their very first entrance into a holy state, on which all ability to do good

works doth depend, and all sincere obedience to the law doth follow after it, as fruit produced by it.

Having thus far explained the direction, I shall now shew, that though the truth contained in it be above the reach of natural reason, yet it is evidently discovered to those that have their understandings opened, to discern that supernatural revelation of the mysterious way of sanctification which God hath given to us in the Holy Scriptures.

First, there are several places in scripture that do plainly express it. Some texts shew “that all things pertaining to our salvation, are treasured up for us in Christ, and comprehended in his fulness;” so that we must have them thence, or not at all. (Col. 1:19), “*It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*” And in the same epistle (Col. 2:11-13), the apostle sheweth that the holy nature whereby we live to God, was first produced in us by his death and resurrection. In whom also ye are circumcised in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh: buried with him, quickened together with him, when you were dead in your sins. “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). A holy frame of spirit, with all its necessary qualifications, must needs be comprehended herein, *in all spiritual blessings*: and these are given us in Christ’s person in heavenly places, as prepared and treasured up in him for us while we are upon earth: and therefore we must have our holy endowments out of him, or not at all. In this text some choose rather to read *heavenly things*, as in the margin, because neither places nor things are expressed in the original; but the former textual reading is to be preferred before the marginal, as being the proper sense of the original Greek phrase, which is, and must necessarily be so rendered in two other places of this same epistle (Eph. 3:10; 6:12). Another text is 1 Cor. 1:30, which sheweth that “Christ is of God made unto us sanctification,” by, which we are able to walk holily; as well as wisdom, by the the knowledge of which we are savingly wise; and righteousness, by the imputation of which we are justified; and redemption, whereby we are redeemed from all misery to the enjoyment of his glory, as our happiness in the heavenly kingdom. Other texts of Scripture shew plainly, that we receive our holiness out of his fulness by fellowship with him (John 1:16, 17). “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” And it is understood of grace answerable to the law given by Moses,

which must needs include the grace of sanctification (1 John 1:3, 5-7). “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. God is light. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” Hence we may infer, that our fellowship with God and Christ, doth include particularly our having light, and walk in it holily and righteously. There are other texts that teach the proof of the whole direction fully; shewing not only that our holy endowments are made ready first in Christ for us, and received from Christ: but that we receive them by union with Christ. Col. 3:10, 11, Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of him that created him: where Christ is all and in all. 1 Cor. 6:17, “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” Gal. 2:20, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” 1 John 5:11, 12, “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Can we desire that God should more clearly teach us, that all the fulness of the new man is in Christ, and all that spiritual nature and life whereby we live to God in holiness, and that they are fixed in him so inseparably, that we cannot have them except we be joined to him, and have himself abiding in us? Take heed, lest through prejudice and hardness of heart, you be guilty of making God a liar, in not believing this eminent record that God hath given to us of his Son.

Secondly, God is pleased to illustrate this mysterious manner of our sanctification, by such a variety of *similitudes* and *resemblances*, as may put us out of doubt that it is truth, and such a truth as we are highly concerned to know and believe. I shall endeavour to contract the chief of these resemblances, and the force of them, briefly into one sentence; leaving it to those that are spiritual to enlarge their meditation upon them. We receive from Christ a new holy frame and nature, whereby we are enabled for a holy practice, by union and fellowship with him, in like manner. (1). As Christ lived in our nature by the Father (John 6:57). (2). As we receive original sin and death propagated to us from the first Adam (Rom. 5:12, 14, 16, 17). (3). As the natural body receiveth sense, motion and nourishment from the head (Col. 2:19). (4). As the branch receiveth its sap, juice and fructifying virtue from the vine (John 15:4, 5). (5). As the wife bringeth forth fruit by virtue of her conjugal union with her husband

(Rom. 7:4, 5). (6). As stones become a holy temple, by being built upon the foundation, and joined with the chief corner-stone (1 Peter 2:4-6). (7). As we receive the nourishing virtue of bread by eating it, and of wine, by drinking it (John 6:51, 55, 57); which last resemblance is used to seal to us our communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper. Here are seven resemblances instanced, whereof some do illustrate the mystery spoken of more fully than others: all of them do someway intimate, that our new life and holy nature are first in Christ, and then in us, by a true proper union and fellowship with him. If any should urge, that the similitude of Adam and his seed, and of married couples, do make rather, for a relative than a real union betwixt Christ and us: let them consider, that all nations are really made of one blood, which was first in Adam (Acts 17:26); and that the first woman was made out of the body of Adam, and was really bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. And by this first married couple, the mystical union of Christ and his church, is eminently resembled, (Gen. 2:22-24; Eph. 5:30-32). And yet it supposeth both these resemblances in the nearness and fulness of them; because those that are joined to the Lord, are not only *one flesh*, but *one spirit* with him.

Thirdly, the *end* of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection, was to prepare and form a holy nature and frame for us in himself, to be communicated to us by union and fellowship with him; and not to enable us to produce in ourselves the first original of such a holy nature by our own endeavours.

1. By his *incarnation*, there was a man created in a new holy frame, after the holiness of the first Adam's frame had been marred and abolished by the first transgression: and this new frame was far more excellent than ever the first Adam's was; because man was really joined to God by a close inseparable union of the divine and human natures in one person, Christ; so that these natures had communion, each with the other, in their actings, and Christ was able to act in his human nature, by power proper to the divine nature, wherein he was one God with the Father. And the words that he spake while that he was here on earth, he spake not of himself by any mere human power, but the Father that dwelt in him, he did the works (John 14:10). Why was it that Christ set up the fallen nature of man in such a wonderful frame of holiness, in bringing it to live

and act by communion with God, living and acting in it? One great end was, that he might communicate this excellent frame to his seed, that should be born of him and in him, by his Spirit, as the last Adam, the quickening Spirit; that *as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so we might also bear the image of the heavenly* (1 Cor. 15:45, 49), in holiness here, and in glory hereafter. Thus he was born IMMANUEL, *God with us*; because the fulness of the Godhead, with all holiness, did first dwell in him bodily, even in his human nature that we might be filled up with that fulness in him (Matt. 1:23; Col. 2:9, 10). Thus he came from heaven as living bread, that, as he liveth by the Father, so that those that eat him, may live by him (John 6:51, 56). by the same life of God in them that was first in him.

2. By his *death*, he freed himself from the guilt of our sins imputed to him, and from all that innocent weakness of his human nature, which he had borne for a time for our sakes. And by freeing himself, he prepared a freedom for us, from our whole natural condition, which is both weak, as his was, and also polluted with our guilt and sinful corruption. Thus the corrupt natural estate, which is called in Scripture the old man, was crucified together with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed. And it is destroyed in us, not by any wounds that we ourselves can give to it, but by our partaking of that freedom from it, and death unto it, that is already wrought out for us by the death of Christ, as is signified by our baptism, wherein we are buried with him by the application of his death to us (Rom. 6:2-4, 10, 11). "*God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin, (or by a sacrifice for sin, as in the margin) condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:3, 4). Observe here, that though Christ died that we might be justified by the righteousness of God and of faith, not by our own righteousness, which is of the law (Rom. 10:4-6; Phil. 3:9); yet he died also, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, and that by walking after his Spirit, as those that are in Christ (Rom. *ibid*). He is resembled in his death to a corn of wheat dying in the earth, that it may propagate its own nature, by bringing forth much fruit (John 12:24); to the Passover that was slain, that a feast might be kept upon it; and to bread broken, that it may be nourishment to those that eat it (1 Cor. 5:7, 8 and 11:24); to the rock

smitten, that water may gush out of it for us to drink (1 Cor. 10:4). He died, that he might make of Jew and Gentile, one new man in himself (Eph. 2:15). and that he might see his seed, i.e. such as derive their holy nature from him (Isa. 53:10). Let these Scriptures be well observed, and they will sufficiently evidence that Christ died, not that we might be able to form a holy nature in ourselves, but that we might receive one ready prepared and formed in Christ for us, by union and fellowship with him.

3. By his *resurrection*, he took possession of spiritual life for us, as now fully procured for us, and made to be our right and property by the merit of his death; and therefore we are said to be quickened together with Christ, even when we were dead in sins, and to be raised up together, yea, and to be made to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, as our head, while we continue upon earth in our own persons (Eph. 2:5, 6). His resurrection was our resurrection to the life of holiness, as Adam's fall was our fall into spiritual death. And we are not ourselves the first makers and formers of our new holy nature, any more than our original corruption; but both are formed ready for us to partake of them. And by union with Christ, we partake of that spiritual life that he took possession of for us at his resurrection, and thereby we are enabled to bring forth the fruits of it, as the Scripture sheweth by the similitude of a marriage union (Rom. 7:4). *We are married to him that is risen from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.* Baptism signifieth the application of Christ's resurrection to us as well as his death; we are raised up with him in it, to newness of life, as well as buried with him; and we are taught thereby, that because *he died unto sin once, and liveth unto God, we should likewise reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom. 6:4, 5, 10, 11).

Fourthly, our sanctification is by the *Holy Ghost*, by whom we live and walk holily (Rom. 15:16; Gal. 5:25). Now, the Holy Ghost first rested on Christ in all fulness, that he might be communicated from him to us, as was signified to John the Baptist, by the similitude of the descending of a dove from the opened heavens, resting on Christ at his baptism (John 1:32, 33). And when he sanctifieth us, he baptizeth us unto Christ, and joineth us to Christ by himself, as the great bond of union (1 Cor. 12:13). So that according

to the scriptural phrase, it is all one to have Christ himself, and to have the Spirit of Christ in us (Rom. 8:9, 10). *He glorifieth Christ; for he receiveth those things that are Christ's, and sheweth them to us* (John 16:14, 15). He giveth us experimental knowledge of those spiritual blessings which he himself prepared for us by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ.

Fifthly, the effectual causes of those four principal endowments, which, in the foregoing direction, were asserted as necessary to furnish us for the immediate practice of holiness, are comprehended in the *fulness of Christ*, and treasured up for us in him; and the endowments themselves, together with their causes, are attained richly by union and fellowship with him. If we be joined to Christ, our hearts will be no longer left under the power of sinful inclinations, or in a mere indifferency of inclination to good or evil, but they will be powerfully endowed with a power, bent and propensity to the practice of holiness, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, and inclining us to mind spiritual things, and to lust against the flesh (Rom. 8:1, 4, 5; Gal. 5:17). And we have in Christ a full reconciliation with God, and an advancement into higher favour with him, than the first Adam had in the state of innocency; because the righteousness that Christ wrought out for us by his obedience unto the death, is imputed to us for our justification, which is called the *righteousness of God*, because it is wrought by one that is God as well as man; and therefore it is of infinite value to satisfy the justice of God for all our sins, and to procure his pardon and highest favour for us (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:19). And, that we may be persuaded of his reconciliation, we receive the spirit of adoption through Christ, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father* (Rom. 8:15). Hereby also we are persuaded of our future enjoyments of everlasting happiness, and of sufficient strength both to will and to perform our duty acceptably, until we come to that enjoyment. For the spirit of adoption teacheth us to conclude, that if we be the children of God, then we are *heirs of God*, and *joint heirs with Christ*; and that the law of the spirit of life, that is in Christ Jesus, maketh us free from the law of sin and death and that nothing shall be against us, nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ; but in all opposition and difficulties that we meet with, we shall be at last “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:17, 23, 35, 37, 39).

Furthermore, this comfortable persuasion of our justification and future happiness, and all saving privileges, cannot *tend to licentiousness*, as it is given only in this *way of union* with Christ; because it is joined inseparably with the *gift of sanctification*, by the Spirit of Christ: so that we cannot have justification, or any saving privilege in Christ, except we receive Christ himself and his holiness, as well as any other benefit; as the Scripture testifieth, that *there is no condemnation to them that "are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* (Rom. 8:1).

Sixthly, Whereas it may be doubted whether the saints that lived before the coming of Christ in the flesh, could possibly be one flesh with him, and receive a new nature by union and fellowship with him, as prepared for them in his fulness: we are to know that the same Christ that took our flesh, *was before Abraham* (John 8:58); and was foreordained before the foundation of the world, to be sacrificed as a lamb without blemish, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, by his precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18-20); and he had the same Spirit then, which filled his human nature with all its fulness afterwards, and raised it from the dead; and he gave that Spirit then to the church (1 Peter 1:11 and 3:18, 19). Now this Spirit was able and effectual to unite those saints, to that flesh which Christ was to take to himself in the fulness of time, because he was the same in both, and to give out to them that grace with which Christ would afterwards fill his flesh for their salvation, as well as ours. Therefore David accounted Christ's flesh to be his, and spake of Christ's death and resurrection as his own, beforehand, as well as any of us can do since their accomplishment (Psa. 16:9-11). "My flesh also shall rest in hope: For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Yea, the saints before David's time, "*did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink,*" even of the same Christ. as we do; and therefore were partakers of the same privilege of union and fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 10:3, 4). And when Christ was manifested in the flesh, in the fulness of time, all things in heaven and earth, all the saints departed, whose spirits *were then made perfect* in heaven, as well as those saints that then were, or should afterwards be on earth, were *gathered together in one*, and comprehended in Christ as their head (Eph. 1:10). And he was "the

chief cornerstone, in whom the building of the whole church upon the foundation of the prophets” before, and the apostles after his coming, being “fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:20, 21). Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). His *incarnation, death and resurrection*, were the *cause* of all the holiness that ever was or shall be given to man, from the fall of Adam to the end of the world; and that by the mighty power of his Spirit, whereby all saints that ever were, or shall be, are joined together, to be members of that one mystical body whereof he is the head.

Direction 4

The means or instruments whereby the Spirit of God accomplisheth our union with Christ, and our fellowship with him in all holiness, are the Gospel, whereby Christ entereth into our hearts to work faith in us; and faith, whereby we actually receive Christ himself, with all his fulness, into our hearts. And this faith is a grace of the Spirit, whereby we heartily believe the gospel, and also believe on Christ, as he is revealed and freely promised to us therein, for all his salvation.

Explication

That which I asserted in the foregoing direction, concerning the necessity of our being in Christ, and having Christ in us, by a mystical union, to enable us for a holy practice, might put us to a stand in our endeavours for holiness; because we cannot imagine how we should be able to raise ourselves above our natural sphere, to this glorious union and fellowship, until God be pleased to make known to us, by supernatural revelation, the means whereby his Spirit maketh us partakers of so high a privilege. But God is pleased to help us, when at a stand, to go on forward, by revealing two means or instruments whereby his Spirit accomplisheth the mystical union and fellowship between Christ and us, and whereby rational creatures are capable of attaining thereunto, by his Spirit working in them.

One of these means is the *gospel* of the grace of God; wherein God doth make known to us the unsearchable riches of Christ, and Christ in us, the hope of glory (Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:27). God doth also

invite us and command us to believe on Christ for his salvation, and doth encourage us by a free promise of that salvation, to all that believe on him (Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9, 11). This is God's own instrument of conveyance, wherein he sendeth Christ to us, to bless us with his salvation (Acts 3:26). He is the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:6, 8, 9). Faith cometh by the hearing of it; and therefore it is the great instrument, whereby we are begotten in Christ, and he is formed in us, (Rom. 10:16, 17; 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19). There is no need for us to say in our hearts, *who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down from above; or, who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ up from the dead*, that we may be united, and have fellowship with him in his death and resurrection? for *the word is nigh to us*, the gospel, the word of faith in which Christ himself graciously condescendeth to be nigh to us; so that we may come at him there, without going any farther, if we desire to be joined to him (Rom. 10:6-8).

The other of these means is *faith* that is wrought in us by the gospel. This is our instrument of reception, whereby the union between Christ and us is accomplished on our part, by our actual receiving Christ himself, with all his fulness, into our heart; which is the principal subject of the present explanation.

The faith, which philosophers commonly treat of is only a *habit* of the understanding, whereby we assent to a testimony upon the authority of the *testifier*. Accordingly, some would have faith in Christ to be no more than a believing the truth of things in religion, upon the authority of Christ testifying them. But the apostle sheweth, that the faith whereby we are justified, is *faith in Christ's blood* (Rom. 3:24, 25), not only in his authority as a *testifier*. And though a mere assent to a testimony were sufficient faith for knowledge of things, which the philosophers aimed at; yet we are to consider, that the design of *saving faith* is not only to know the truth of Christ and his salvation, testified and promised in the gospel, but also to apprehend and receive him and his salvation, as given by and with the promise. Therefore, saving faith must necessarily contain two acts, believing the truth of the gospel, and believing on Christ, as promised freely to us in the gospel, for salvation. By the one, it conceiveth the *means* wherein Christ is conveyed to us; by the other, it *receiveth Christ himself*, and his salvation *in the means*, as it is one

act, to receive the breast or cup wherein milk or wine are conveyed, and another act, to suck the milk in the breast, and to drink the wine in the cup. And both these acts must be performed heartily, with an unfeigned love to the truth, and a desire of Christ and his salvation above all things. This is our spiritual appetite, which is truly necessary for our eating and drinking Christ, the food of life, as a natural appetite is for bodily nourishment. Our assenting unto, or believing the gospel, must not be forced by mere conviction of the truth, such as wicked men and devils may be brought to, when they had rather it were false; neither must our believing in Christ be only constrained, for fear of damnation, without any hearty love and desire towards the enjoyment of him; but we must receive the love of the truth, by relinquishing the godliness and excellency of it; and we must Account all these things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and count them but dung, that we may win Christ and be found in him (2 Thess. 2:10; Phil. 3:8, 9). Esteeming Christ to be all our salvation and happiness (Col. 3:11). In whom all fulness doth dwell (Col. 1:19). And this love must be to every part of Christ's salvation; to holiness as well as forgiveness of sins. We must desire earnestly, that God would *create in us a clean heart and right spirit, as well as hide his face from our sins* (Psa. 51:9, 10); not like many that care for nothing in Christ but only deliverance from hell. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled* (Matt. 5:6).

The former of these acts doth immediately *unite us* to Christ, because it is terminated only on the *means of conveyance*, the gospel; yet it is a *saving act*, if it be rightly performed, because it inclineth and disposeth the soul to the latter act, whereby Christ himself is immediately received into the heart. He that believeth the gospel with hearty love and liking, as the most excellent truth, will certainly, with the like heartiness believe on Christ for his salvation. *They that know the name of the Lord, will certainly put their trust in him* (Psa. 9:10). Therefore, in scripture, saving faith is sometimes described by the former of these acts, as if it were a mere believing the gospel; some times by the latter, as a believing on Christ, or in Christ. Rom. 10:9, *If thou believest in thine heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Verse 11, *The Scripture saith, that whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.* 1 John

5:1, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* Verse 13, *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, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

For the better understanding of the nature of faith, let it be further observed, that the second and principal act of it, believing on Christ, includeth believing on God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; because they are one and the same infinite God, and they all concur in our Salvation by Christ, as the only mediator between God and us, in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen (2 Cor. 1:20). By him (as mediator) we believe on God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God (1 Peter 1:21). And it is the same thing with *trusting* on God, or on the Lord, which is so highly commended in the whole Scripture especially in the Old Testament; as may easily appear, by considering, that it hath the same causes, effects, objects, adjuncts, opposites, and all the same circumstances, excepting only that it had a respect to Christ as promised before his coming, and now it respecteth him as already come in the flesh. Believing on the Lord, and trusting in his salvation, are equivalent terms, that explain one another (Psa. 78:22). I confess, that trusting on things seen, or known by the mere light of reason, as our own wisdom, power, riches, on princes, or any arm of flesh, may not so properly be called believing on them; but trusting on a Saviour as discovered by a testimony, is properly believing on him. It is also the same thing that is expressed by the terms of resting, relying, leaning, staying ourselves on the Lord, called hoping in the Lord; because it is the ground of that expectation which is the proper act of hope, though our believing and trusting be for the present as well as future benefit of this salvation. The reason why it is so commonly expressed, in the Scriptures of the New Testament, by the terms of *believing on Christ*, might be probably, because, when that part of Scripture was written, there was cause, in a special, manner, to urge believing the testimony that, was then newly revealed by the gospel.

Having thus explained the nature of faith, I come now to assert its proper use and office in our salvation. That it is the means and instrument whereby we receive Christ and all his fulness, actually into our hearts. This excellent use and office of faith is encountered

by a multitude of errors. Men naturally esteem that it is too small and slight a thing to produce so great effects, as Naaman thought washing in Jordan too small a matter for the cure of his leprosy. They contemn the true means of entering in at the strait gate, because they seem too easy for such purpose; and thereby they make the entrance not only difficult, but impossible to themselves. Some will allow that faith is the sole condition of our justification, and the instrument to receive it, according to the doctrine maintained formerly by the protestants against the papists; but they account that it is not sufficient or effectual to sanctification, but that it rather tendeth to licentiousness, if it be not joined with some other means, that may be powerful and effectual to secure an holy practice. They commend this great doctrine of protestants, as a comfortable cordial for persons on their deathbeds, or in, agonies under terrors of conscience; but they account that it is not good for ordinary food, and that it is wisdom in ministers to preach it seldom and sparingly, and not without some antidote or corrective, to prevent the licentiousness to which it tendeth. Their common antidote or corrective is, that sanctification is necessary to salvation as well as justification; and that though we be justified by faith, yet we are sanctified by our own performance of the law: and so they set up salvation by works, and make the grace of justification to be of none effect, and not at all comfortable. If it had indeed such a malignant influence upon practice, it could not be owned as a doctrine proceeding from the most holy God; and all the comfort that it affords, must needs be ungrounded and deceitful. This consequence is well understood by some late refiners of the protestant religion; and therefore they have thought fit to new-model this doctrine, and to make saving faith to be only a condition to procure a right and title to our justification by the righteousness of Christ, which must be performed before we can lay any good claim to the enjoyment of it, and before we have any right to use any instrument for the actual receiving of it; and this they call an accepting of, and receiving Christ. And, that they may the better secure the practice of holiness, by their conditional faith, they will not have *trusting God or Christ for salvation*, to be accounted the principal saving act of it; because, as it seemeth to them, many loose wicked people trust on God and Christ for their salvation as much as others, and are by their

confidence, hardened the more in their wickedness; but they had rather it should be *obedience of all Christ's laws*, at least in *resolution*; or a *consent* that Christ should be their Lord, accepting of his terms of salvation, and a resignation of themselves to his government in all things. It is a sign that the Scripture form of teaching is grown into disesteem with our great masters of reason, when trusting in the Lord, so much commended in the Scripture, is accounted a mean and ordinary thing. They endeavour to affright us from owning faith to be an instrument of justification, by telling us that thereby we that use the instrument, are made our own principal justifiers, to the dishonour of God; though it might be easily answered, that we are made thereby only the principal receivers of our own justification from God, the giver of it, to whom all the glory doth belong.

All these errors will fall, if it can be proved that such a faith as I have described, is an instrument whereby we actually receive Christ himself into our hearts, and holiness of heart and life, as well as justification, by union and fellowship with him. For the proof of it, I shall offer the following arguments.

First, by faith we have the actual enjoyment and possession of Christ himself, and not only of remission of sins, but of life, and so of holiness. *Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith* (Eph. 3:17). *We live to God, and yet not we, but Christ liveth in us by the faith of the Son of God* (Gal. 2:19, 20). *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Son, and everlasting life that is in him* (1 John 5:12, 13; John 3:36). *He that heareth Christ's word, and believeth on him that sent Christ, hath everlasting life, and is passed from death unto life*, (John 5:24). These texts express clearly such a faith as I have described. Therefore the efficiency or, operation of faith, in order to the enjoyment of Christ and his fulness, cannot be the procurement of a bare right or title to this enjoyment; but rather it must be an entrance into it, and taking possession of it. *We have our access and entrance by faith into that grace of Christ wherein we stand* (Rom. 5:2).

Secondly, the Scripture plainly ascribeth this effect to faith, that by it we receive Christ, put him on, are rooted and grounded in him: and also that we receive the Spirit, remission of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26,

27; Col. 2:6, 7; Gal. 3:14; Acts 26:18). And the Scripture illustrateth this receiving by the similitude of eating and drinking; he that believeth on Christ, drinketh the living water of his Spirit, (John 7:37-39). Christ is the bread of life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. And the way to eat and drink it, is to believe in Christ; and by so doing, we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, and have everlasting life (John 6:35, 47, 48, 54-56). How can it be taught more clearly, that we receive Christ himself properly into our souls by faith, as we do receive food into our bodies by eating and drinking, and that Christ is as truly united to us thereby, as our food when we eat or drink it? So that faith cannot be a condition to procure a mere right or title to Christ, no more than eating or drinking procureth a mere right or title to our food; but it is rather an instrument to receive it, as the mouth that eateth and drinketh the food.

Thirdly, Christ with all his salvation, is freely given by the grace of God to all that believe on him: for *we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God* (Eph. 2:8, 9). *We are justified freely by his grace, through faith in his blood* (Rom. 3:24, 25). The Holy Ghost, who is the bond of union between Christ and us, as a gift (Acts 2:38). Now, that which is a gift of grace, must not at all be earned, purchased, or procured by any work, or works performed as a condition to get a right or title to it: and therefore, faith itself must not be accounted such a conditional work. *If it be by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace* (Rom. 11:6). The condition of a free gift is only take and have. And in this sense we will readily acknowledge faith to be a condition, allowing a liberty in terms where we agree in the thing; but if you give a pepper corn to purchase a title to it, then you spoil the freeness of the gift. The free offer of Christ to you, is sufficient to confer upon you a right, yea, to make it your duty to receive Christ and his salvation as yours. And because we receive Christ by faith as a free gift, therefore we may account faith to be the instrument, and, as it were, the hand whereby we receive him.

Fourthly, it hath been already proved, that all spiritual life and holiness are treasured up in the fulness of Christ, and communicated to us by union with him. Therefore, the accomplishing of union with Christ, is the first work of saving grace in our hearts. And faith itself

being a holy grace, and part of spiritual life, cannot be in us before the beginning of it; but rather it is given to us, and wrought in the very working of the union. And the way wherein it conduceth to the union, cannot be by procuring a mere title to Christ as a condition, because then it should be performed before the uniting work beginneth; but rather by being an instrument whereby we may actually receive and embrace Christ, who is already come into the soul to take possession of it as his own habitation.

Fifthly, true saving faith, such as I have described, hath in its nature and manner of operation of a peculiar aptitude or fitness to receive Christ and his salvation, and to unite our souls into him and to furnish the soul with a new holy nature, and to bring forth a holy practice, by union and fellowship with him. God hath fitted natural instruments for their office, as the hands, feet, &c. so that we may know by their nature and natural manner of operation, for what use they are designed. In like manner we may know that faith is an instrument formed on purpose for our union with Christ, and sanctification, if we consider what a peculiar fitness it hath for the work. The discovery of this is of great use for the understanding of the mysterious manner of our receiving and practising all holiness, by union and fellowship with Christ, by this precious grace of faith. And to make you, as it were, to see with your eyes, that it is such an instrument as I have asserted it to be, I shall present it to your view in three particulars.

1. The grace of faith is as well fitted for the soul's receiving Christ and union with him, as any instrument of the body is for receiving and closing with things needful for it. By the very act of hearty trusting or believing on Christ for salvation and happiness, the soul casteth and putteth away from itself, every thing that keepeth it at a distance from Christ; as all confidence in our strength, endeavours, works, privileges, or in any worldly pleasures, profits, honours, or in any human helps and succours for our happiness and salvation: because such confidences are inconsistent with our confidence in Christ for all salvation. Paul, by his confidence in Christ, was taken off from all confidence in the flesh: he suffered the loss of glorying in his privileges and legal righteousness, and counted all other enjoyments in matters of the world, or of religion, to be but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in him (Phil. 3:3, 5-9). The

voice of faith is, “Asher shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy” (Hos. 14:3). “We have no might against this great company” of our spiritual enemies, “neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2 Chron. 20:12).

I might multiply places of scripture, to shew what a self-emptying grace faith is, and how it casteth other confidences out of the soul, by getting above them to Christ, as the only happiness and salvation. The same act of trusting or believing on Christ, or on God, is the very manner of our souls coming to Christ (John 6:35); drawing near to the Lord (Psa. 73:28); fleeing unto the Lord to hide us (Psa. 143:9); making our refuge in the shadow of his wings (Psa. 57:1); staying ourselves and our minds upon the Lord (Isa. 50:10; 26:3); laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12); lifting up our souls to the Lord, (Psa. 25:1); committing our way, or casting our burden upon the Lord (Psa. 37:5; 55:22); and of our eating and drinking Christ, as hath already appeared. Let us consider, that Christ and his salvation cannot be seen, or handled, or attained to, by any bodily motion; but are revealed and promised to us in the word. Now let any invent, if they can, any way for the soul to exercise any motion or activeness in receiving of this unseen promised salvation, besides believing the word, and trusting on Christ for the benefit promised. If Christ were to be earned by works, or any other kind of conditional faith: yet a faith must be instrumental to receive him. Some think love as fit to be the uniting grace; but I have shewed that love to Christ’s salvation is an ingredient unto faith; and though love be an appetite unto union, yet we have no other likely way to fill this appetite, while we are in this world, besides trusting on Christ for all his benefits, as he is promised in the gospel.

2. There is in this saving faith, a natural tendency to furnish the soul with a holy frame and nature, and all endowments necessary thereunto, out of the fulness of Christ. A hearty affectionate trusting on Christ for all his salvation, as freely promised to us, hath naturally enough in it to work in our souls a rational bent and inclination to, and ability for, the practice of all holiness; because it comprehendeth in it a trusting, that *through Christ, we are dead to sin, and alive to God; that our old man is crucified* (Rom. 6:2-4);

and that *we live by the Spirit* (Gal. 5:25); and that *we have forgiveness of sin*, and that *God is our God* (Psa. 48:14); and that *we have in the Lord righteousness and strength, whereby we are able to do all things* (Isa. 45:24; Phil. 4:13); and that *we shall be gloriously happy in the enjoyment of Christ to all eternity* (Phil. 3:20, 21). When the saints in scripture speak so highly of such glorious spiritual privileges, as I have here named, they acquaint us with the familiar sense and language of their faith, trusting on God and Christ, and they give us but an explication of the nature and contents of it; and they speak of nothing more than what they receive out of the fulness of Christ. And how can we otherwise judge, but that those that have a hearty love to Christ, and can upon a good ground, think, and speak such high things concerning themselves, must needs be heartily disposed, and mightily strengthened for the practice of holiness?

3. Because faith hath such a natural tendency to dispose and strengthen the soul for the practice of holiness, we have cause to judge it a meet instrument to accomplish every part of that practice in an acceptable manner. Those that with a due affection believe steadfastly on Christ for the free gift of all his salvation, may find, by experience, that they are carried forth by that faith, according to the measure of its strength or weakness, to love God heartily, because God hath loved them first (1 John 4:19); to praise him, to pray unto him, in the name of Christ (Eph. 5:20; John 16:26, 27); to be patient with cheerfulness under all afflictions, giving thanks to the Father, that hath called them to his heavenly inheritance (Col. 1:11, 12); to love all the children of God out of love to their heavenly Father (1 John 5:1); to walk as Christ walked (1 John 2:6); and to give themselves up to live to Christ in all things, as constrained by his love in dying for them (2 Cor. 5:14). We have a cloud of witnesses, concerning the excellent works that were produced by faith (Heb. 11). And though trusting on Christ be accounted such a slight and contemptible thing, yet I know no work of obedience, which it is not able to produce. And note the excellent manner of working by faith. By it we live and act in all good works, as people in Christ, as raised above ourselves, and in our natural state, by partaking of him and his salvation; and we do all in his name, and on his account. This is the practice of that mysterious

manner of living to God in holiness, which is peculiar to the Christian religion wherein we live; *and yet not we, but Christ liveth in us* (Gal. 2:20). And who can imagine any other way but this for such a practice, while Christ and his salvation are known to us only by the gospel?

The explanation that I have made of the *nature* and *office* of *true faith*, and of its *aptitude* for its office, is sufficient to evidence, that it is a most *holy faith*, as it is called (Jude verse 20); and that such a trusting on Christ, as I have described, in its own nature, cannot have any tendency to licentiousness, but only to holiness: and that it rooteth and groundeth us in holiness, more than the mere accepting of any terms of salvation, and consenting to have Christ for our Lord can do; and is more powerful to secure a holy practice, than any of those resolutions of obedience, or resignation acts, that some would have to be the great conditions of our salvation; which are indeed no better than hypocritical acts, if they be not produced by this faith. There is indeed a counterfeit dead faith, such as wicked men have; and if that tend to licentiousness, let not true faith be blamed; but rather mark the description of it which I have given, that you may not be deceived with a counterfeit faith instead of it.

I shall add something concerning the *efficient cause* of this excellent grace, and of our union with Christ by it; whereby it may appear, that it is not so slight and easy a way of salvation, as some may imagine. The *author and finisher of our faith*, and of our union and fellowship with Christ by faith, is no less than the *infinite Spirit of God*, and *God and Christ himself by the same Spirit*; for, *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body of Christ, and are all made to drink into one* (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). *God grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with all might, by the Spirit, in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith* (Eph. 3:16, 17). If we do but consider the great effect of faith, that by it we are raised to live above our natural condition, by Christ and his Spirit living in us, we cannot rationally conceive, that it should be within the power of nature to do anything that advanceth us so high.

If God, had done no more for us in our sanctification, than to restore us to our first natural holiness; yet this could not have been done, without putting forth his own almighty power to quicken those that are dead in sin; how much more is this almighty power needful

to advance us to this wonderful new kind of frame, wherein we live and act, above all the power of nature, by a higher principle of life than was given to Adam in innocency, even by Christ and his Spirit living and acting in us! The natural man bringeth forth his off spring, according to his image, by that natural power of multiplying, with which God blessed him at his first creation; but the second Adam bringeth forth his off spring new-born according to his image, only by the Spirit (John 3:5). *As many as received him, even those that believe on his name, are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* (John 1:12, 13). Christ took his own human nature into personal union with himself, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, by the Holy Ghost coming upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, the same power whereby the world was created (Luke 1:35). So he that taketh us into *mystical union* and *fellowship* with himself, by no less than an *infinite creating power*; for *we are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works* (Eph. 2:10); and, *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature* (2 Cor. 5:17).

For the accomplishing this great work of our new creation in Christ, the Spirit of God doth first work upon our hearts, by and with the gospel, to produce in us the *grace of faith*. For if the gospel should come to us in *word only*, and not in *power*, and in the *Holy Ghost*, Paul might labour to plant, and Apollos to water, without any success, because we cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God: yea, we shall account them foolishness, until the Spirit of God enable us to discern them (1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Cor. 3:6 and 2:14). We shall never come to Christ, by any teaching of man, except we also hear and learn of the Father, and be drawn to Christ by his Spirit, (John 6:44, 45). And, when saving faith is wrought in us, the same Spirit giveth us fast hold of Christ by it. As he openeth the mouth of faith to receive Christ so he filleth it with him; or else the acting of faith would be like a dream of one that thinketh he eateth and drinketh, and when he awaketh, he findeth himself empty. The same Spirit of God did both give that faith whereby miracles were wrought, and did work also the miracles by it; so also the same Spirit of Christ doth work saving faith in us, and doth answer the aim and end of that faith, by giving us union and fellowship with Christ by it; so that none of the glory of this work belongeth to faith,

but only to Christ and his Spirit. And, indeed, faith is of such a humbling self-denying nature, that it ascribeth nothing that it receiveth to itself, but all to the grace of God; and therefore *God saveth us by faith*, that all the glory may be ascribed to his *free grace* (Rom. 4:16). If Adam had strength enough in innocency, to perform the duty of faith as well as we, yet it will not follow that he had strength enough to raise himself above his natural state, into union with Christ; because faith doth not unite us to Christ by its own virtue, but by the power of the Spirit working by it, and with it. Thus we are first passive, and then active, in this great work of mystical union; we are first apprehended of Christ, and then we apprehend Christ. Christ entereth first into the soul, to join himself unto it, by giving it the spirit of faith; and so the soul receiveth Christ and his Spirit by their own power; as the sun first enlighteneth our eyes, and then we can see it by its own light.

We may note farther, to the glory of the grace of God, that this union is fully accomplished by Christ, giving the spirit of faith to us, even before we act that faith, in the reception of him; because by this grace or spirit of faith, the soul is inclined and disposed to an active receiving of Christ. And no doubt Christ is thus united to many infants who have the spirit of faith, and yet cannot act faith, because they are not come to the use of their understandings; but those of riper years, that are joined passively to Christ, by the spirit of faith, will also join themselves with him actively, by the act of faith: and until they act this faith, they cannot know or enjoy their union with Christ, and the comfort of it, or make use of it in acting any other duties of holiness acceptably in this life.

Direction 5

We cannot attain to the Practice of true holiness, by any of our endeavours, while we continue in our natural state, and are not partakers of a new state, by union and fellowship with Christ through faith.

Explication

It is evident, all have not that *precious faith*, whereby Christ dwelleth in our hearts ; yea, the number of those that have it is small, comparatively to the *Whole world that lieth in wickedness* (1 John

5:19, 20); and many of those, that at length attain to it, do continue without it, for some considerable time, (Eph. 2:12). And though some may have the spirit of faith given to them from their mother's womb (as John the Baptist, Luke 1:15, 44)). yet even in them there is a *natural* being by generation, before there can be a *spiritual* being by regeneration, (1 Cor. 15:46). Hence ariseth the consideration of two estates or conditions of the children of men, in matters that appertain to God, and godliness; the one of which is vastly different from the other.

Those that have the happiness of a new birth and creation in Christ by faith, are thereby placed in a very excellent state, consisting in the enjoyment of the righteousness of Christ, for their justification; and the Spirit of Christ to live by, in holiness here, and glory for ever, as hath already appeared. Those that are not in Christ by faith, cannot be in a better state than that which they received, together with their nature, from the first Adam, by being once born and created in him; or than they can attain to by the power of that nature, with any such help as God is pleased to afford to it. This latter I call a *natural state*; because it consisteth in such things as we have either received by natural generation, or can attain to by natural power, through divine assistance; as the scripture calleth man in this state, *the natural man* (1 Cor. 2:14). The former I call the *new state*, because we enter into it by a new birth in Christ: and I may call it a *spiritual state*, according to the scripture; because it receiveth from Christ the quickening Spirit, and the *natural* and *spiritual* man are opposed (1 Cor. 2:14, 15); though some call both these states spiritual, because the everlasting weal or woe of the soul, or spirit, of man, is chiefly concerned in them.

It is a common error of those that are in a corrupt natural state, that they seek to reform their lives according to law, without any thoughts that their state must be changed, before their lives can be changed from sin to righteousness. The heathens, that knew nothing of a new state in Christ, were urged by their own consciences, to practise several duties of the law, according to the knowledge they had by the light of nature (Rom. 2:14, 15). Israel, according to the flesh, had a zeal of God and godliness, and endeavoured to practise the written law, at least in external performances, while they were enemies to the faith of Christ. And Paul attained so far, that he was

blameless in these external performances of the righteousness of the law, while he persecuted the church of Christ (Phil. 3:6).

Some are so near the kingdom of God, while they continue in a natural state, that they are convinced of the spirituality of the law, that it bindeth us principally to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves; and to perform universal obedience to God, in all our inward thoughts and affections, as well as in all our outward actions, and to do all the incumbent duties we owe to our neighbour, out of this hearty love (Mark 12:33, 34). And they struggle and labour with great earnestness to subdue their inward thoughts and affections to the law of God, and to abstain, not only from some sins, but from all known sins, and to perform every known duty of the law with their whole heart and soul, as they think; and are active and intent in their devout practice, that they over-work their natural strength, and so fervent in their zeal, that they are ready even to kill their bodies with very severe fastings, and with other cruel macerations, that they may kill their sinful lusts. They are strongly convinced that holiness is absolutely necessary to salvation, and are deeply affected with the terrors of damnation; and yet they were never so much enlightened in the mystery of the gospel, as to know that a new state in Christ is necessary to a new life; therefore they labour in vain to reform their natural state, instead of getting above it in Christ. And some of these, when they have mis-spent many years in striving against the stream of their lusts, without any success, do at last fall miserably into despair of ever attaining to holiness, and turn to wallow in the mire of their lusts, or are fearfully swallowed up with horror of conscience.

There are several false opinions whereby such ignorant zealots encourage themselves in their fruitless endeavours. Some of them judge that they are able to practise holiness, because they are not compelled to sin, and may abstain from it if they will. To this they add, that Christ, by the merit of his death, hath restored that freedom of will to good, which was lost by the fall, and hath set nature upon its legs again; and that, If they endeavour to do what lieth in them, Christ will do the rest, by assisting them with, the supplies of his saving grace; so they trust upon the grace of Christ to help them in their endeavours. They plead farther, that it would not consist with

the justice of God to punish them for sin, if they could avoid it; and that it would be in vain, for ministers of the gospel to preach to them, and exhort them to any saving duty, if they cannot perform it. They produce examples of heathens, and of such as had the name of Christians, without any acquaintance with the faith that I have described, who have attained to a great excellency in religious words and works.

My work at present is, to deliver those ignorant zealots from their fruitless tormenting labours, by bringing them to despair of the attainment of holiness, in a natural state, that they may seek it only in a new state by faith in Christ, where they may certainly find it, without such tormenting labour and anxiety of spirit. For this end, I shall confirm the truth asserted in the Direction, and fortify it against the fore-mentioned false opinions, by the ensuing considerations.

First, the foundation of this assertion is firmly laid in the directions already explained, and confirmed by many places of scripture. For if all endowments necessary to enable us for a holy practice, can be had only in a state of union and fellowship with Christ by faith, and faith itself, not by the natural power of free will, but by the power of Christ coming into the soul by his Spirit, to unite us with himself; who seeth not, that the attainment of true holiness, by any of our most vigorous endeavours, while we continue in our natural state, is altogether hopeless? I need add no more, were it not to shew more fully what abundance of light the scripture affordeth to guide us aright in this part of our way, that those who wander out of it, by following any false light of their own or other corrupted judgments, may find themselves the more inexcusable.

Secondly, it is evident that we cannot practise true holiness, while we continue in a natural state; because we must *be born of water and of the Spirit, or else we cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (John 3:3, 5); and we *are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Eph. 2:10). If we could love God and our neighbour, as the law requireth, without a new birth and creation, we might live without them; for Christ hath said, "*this do, and thou shalt live,*" (Luke 10:28). Now, a new birth and creation is more than a mere reforming and repairing our natural state. If we were put into a certain state and condition, by the first birth and creation, much more by the second. For the first

produceth the substance of a man as well as a state; the second had nothing to produce, but a new state of the same person. And note, that we were first created and born in Adam the natural man, but our new birth and creation are in Christ the spiritual man. And *if any man be in Christ, he is in a new state*, far different from the state of Adam before the fall; he is wholly a *new creature*: as it is written, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

Thirdly, it is positively asserted by the apostle Paul, that *those that are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom. 8:8). Many are too overly and negligent in considering the sense of this gospel phrase, what it is to be *in the flesh*. They understand no more by it than to be sinful, or to be addicted inordinately to please the sensitive appetite. They should consider, that the apostle speaketh here of *being in the flesh*, as the cause of sinfulness; as the next verse speaketh of being *in the Spirit*, as the cause of holiness; and whatever cause it be, it must needs be different from its effect. *Sin* is a property of the *flesh*, or something that dwelleth in the *flesh* (Rom. 7:18); and therefore it is not the flesh itself. The *flesh* is that which *lusteth against the Spirit* (Gal. 5:17); and therefore it is not merely sinful lusting. The true interpretation is, that by *flesh* is meant the *nature of man*, as it is corrupted by the fall of Adam, and propagated from him to us, in that corrupt state, by natural generation; and to be *in the flesh*, is to be in a *natural state*; as to be *in the Spirit*, is to be in a *new state*, by the *Spirit of Christ dwelling in us* (Rom. 8:9). The corrupt nature is called *flesh*, because it is received by carnal generation; and the new nature is called *spirit*, because it is received by spiritual regeneration. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit* (John 3:6). So the apostle, if it be rightly understood, hath said enough to make us despair utterly of attaining to true holiness, while we continue in a natural state.

Fourthly, the apostle testifieth, that those that *have been taught as the truth is in Jesus*, have learned to avoid the normal sinful conversation, by *putting off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts and by putting on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness* (Eph. 4:21, 22, 24). Putting off the *old man*, and putting on the *new man*, is the same with not being in the *flesh*, but in the *Spirit*, in the foregoing

testimony; that is, putting off our *natural* state, and putting on a *new* state, by union and fellowship with Christ. The apostle himself sheweth, that by the *new man* is meant, that excellent state where Christ is *all*, and *in all* (Col. 3:11). Therefore, by the *old man*, must needs be meant, the natural state of man, wherein he is without the saving enjoyment of Christ; which is called *old*, because of the *new* state to which believers are brought by their regeneration in Christ. This is a manner of expression peculiar to the gospel, as well as the former, and as slightly considered by those that think that the apostle's meaning is only, that they should put off sinfulness, and put on holiness in their conversation; and so they think to become new men, by turning over anew leaf in their practice, and leading a new life.

Let them learn here, that the *old* and *new* man are two contrary states, containing in them, not only sin and holiness, but all other things that dispose and incline us to the practice of them; and that the old man must be put off, as crucified with Christ, before we can be freed from the practice of sin (Rom. 6:6, 7). And there we cannot lead a new life, until we have first gotten a new state by faith in Christ. Let me add here, that the meaning of the apostle is the same (Rom. 13:12-14). where he directeth us to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, as the means whereby we may cast off the deeds of darkness, and walk honestly, as in the day time, not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

Fifthly, our natural state hath several *properties* that wholly disable us for the practice of holiness, and enslave us to the practice of sin, while we continue in it. Here I shall shew, that the *old* man, the *flesh*, or *natural state*, is not only sin, as some would have it, but it containeth in it several things which I shall name, that maketh it to be sinful, besides several other things that maketh it miserable. I have shewed, that in Christ we have all endowments necessary to frame us for godliness; so, in our fleshy state, we have all things contrary to that holy frame. One thing belongeth to our natural state is, the *guilt of sin*, even of Adam's first sin, and of the sinful depravation of our nature, and of all our own actual transgressions; and therefore we are by nature *the children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3), and under the *curse of God*. The benefit of remission of our sins, and freedom from condemnation, is not given to us in the *flesh*, or in a

natural state, but only *in Christ* (Rom. 8:1; Eph. 1:7). And can we imagine, that a man should be able to prevail against sin, while God is against him, and curseth him?—Another property, inseparable from the former, is, an *evil conscience* which denounceth the wrath of God against us for sin, and inclineth us to abhor him, as our enemy, rather than to love him, as he hath been shewed; or if it be a blind conscience, it hardeneth us the more in our sins.—A third property, is an *evil inclination*, tending only to sin; which therefore is called *sin that dwelleth in us*, and the *law of sin in our members*, that powerfully subdueth and *captivateth us to the service of sin* (Rom. 7:20, 23). It is a fixed propensity to lust against the law without any deliberation; and therefore its lustings are not to be prevented by any diligence or watchfulness. *The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be* (Rom. 8:7). How vain then is it to plead, that they can do good if they will, when their minds and will itself are enslaved to sin?—A fourth property is, *subjection to the power of the Devil, who is the god of this world, that hath blinded the minds of all that believe not* (2 Cor. 4:4); and will certainly conquer all whom he fighteth with on his own dunghill; that is, in a *natural state*.—And from all these properties, we may well conclude, that our natural state hath the property never to be good, to be stark dead in sin (Eph. 2:1), according to the sentence denounced against the first sin of mankind in Adam. *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Gen. 2:17). For, you can no more bring it to holiness, by any the most vehement motives and endeavours, than you can bring a dead carcase to life, by chaffing and rubbing it. You can stir up no strength, or fortifying grace, in the natural man by such motives and endeavours; because there is no strength in him to be stirred up (Rom. 5:6). Though you do all that lieth in you to the utmost, while you are in this flesh, you can do nothing but sin; for there is *no good thing in you*: as the apostle Paul sheweth by his own experience. “I know, that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,” (Rom. 7:18).

Sixthly, we have no good ground to trust on Christ to help us to will or to do that which is acceptable to him, while we continue in our natural state; or to imagine that freedom of will to holiness is restored to us by the merit of his death. For, as it hath been already

shewed, Christ aimed at a higher end, in his incarnation, death and resurrection, than the restoring the decay and ruins of our natural state. He aimed to advance us to a new state, more excellent than the state of nature ever was, by union and fellowship with himself; that we might live to God, not by the power of natural free-will, but by the power of his Spirit living and acting in us. So we may conclude, that our natural state is irrecoverable and desperate, because Christ, the only Saviour, did not aim at the recovery of it. It is neither holy nor happy, but subject to sin, and to all miseries, as long as it remaineth. Even these that are in a new state in Christ, and do serve the law of God with their mind, do yet with their *flesh serve the law of sin* (Rom. 7:25). As far as it remaineth in them, it *lusteth against the Spirit* (Gal. 5:17); and *it remaineth dead, because of the sin*, even when *the Spirit is life* to them, *because of righteousness* (Rom. 8:10); and must be wholly abolished by death, before we can be perfected in that holiness and happiness that is by faith in Christ. After God had promised salvation by Christ, the seed of the woman, he placed cherubims and a flaming sword to keep man out of Paradise: thereby teaching him, that his first state was lost without hope, and that the happiness intended for him was wholly new. Our old natural man was not revived and reformed by the death of Christ, but crucified together with him, and therefore to be abolished and destroyed out of us by virtue of his death (Rom. 6:6). It is like the part of a garment infected with the plague of leprosy, which was to be rent off as incurable, that the garment might be clean (Lev. 13:56). *If Christ be not in us, we are reprobates* (2 Cor. 13:5); *i.e.* we are in a state which God hath rejected from partaking of his salvation; so that we are not to expect any assistance from God, to make us holy in it, but rather to deliver us from it.

Seventhly, this doth not at all discharge those that are in a natural state from obligation to holiness of life, nor render them inexcusable for their sins at the tribunal of God's justice. For, *God hath made man upright, but they sought out many inventions* (Eccl. 7:29). observe well the words of this text, and you will find, that all they who have sought out many inventions, rather than upright walking, are comprehended in *man* that was at first made upright. And *man*, in the text signifieth all mankind. The first Adam was all mankind, as Jacob and Esau were two nations in the womb of Rebecca (Gen.

25:23). God made us all in our first parent, according to his own image, able and inclined to do his law; and in that pure nature, our obligation to obedience was first laid upon us, and the first wilful transgression, whereby our first parent bereaved himself of the image of God, and brought upon himself the sentence of death, was our sin as well as his; for, *in one man, Adam, all have sinned, and so death is passed upon all* (Rom. 5:12); because all mankind were in Adam's loins, when the first sin was committed; even as Levi may be said to have paid tithes in Abraham before he was born; because, when his father Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, he was yet in his loins (Heb. 7:9, 10). That the promise of God, that he will not charge the iniquities of parents upon their children, is a promise belonging to the new covenant confirmed in the blood of Christ; and it is yea and amen to us only in Christ, in whom we have another nature than that which our parents conveyed to us; so that we cannot justly claim the benefit of it in our old natural state (Jer. 31:29-31; 2 Cor. 1:20). Those that account their impotency a sufficient plea to excuse them or others, shew that they were never truly humbled for that great wilful transgression of all mankind in the loins of Adam. Inability to pay debt, excuseth not a debtor that hath lavished away his estate; neither doth drunkenness excuse the mad actings of a drunkard, but rather aggravates his sin. And our impotency consisteth not in a mere want of *executive power*, but in the want of *a willing mind*, to practise true holiness and righteousness. Naturally we love it not, we like it not, but *lusteth* against it (Gal. 5:17); and *hate the light* (John 3:20). If men in a natural state had a hearty love, and liking to true holiness, and a desire and serious endeavour to practise it, out of a hearty love, and yet failed in the event, then they might, under some pretence, plead for their excuse (as some do for them) that they were compelled to sin by an inevitable fate. But none have just cause to plead any such thing for their excuse; because none endeavour to practise true holiness out of a hearty love to it, until the good work be begun in their souls; and, when God hath begun he will perfect it (Phil. 1:6); and while, in the meantime, accept their ready mind, though they fall short in performance (2 Cor. 8:12). "How abominable, *then*, and filthy is man, that drinketh iniquity as water?" (Job. 15:16); that cannot practise holiness, because he will not? this is their just condemnation, *that they love*

darkness rather than light. They deserve to be partakers with the devils in torments, as they partake with them in evil lusts; and their inability to do good, will no more excuse them, than it excuseth the devils.

Eighthly, neither will this assertion make it a vain thing to preach the gospel to natural people, and to exhort them to true repentance and faith in Christ, for their conversion and salvation. For the design of our preaching is not to bring them to holiness in their natural state, but to raise them above it, and to present them *perfect in Christ*, in the performance of those duties (Col. 1:28). And though they cannot perform those duties by their natural strength; yet the gospel is made effectual for their conversion and salvation, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which accompanieth the preaching of it, to quicken those that are dead in sin, and to create them anew in Christ, by giving to them repentance unto life, and a lively faith in Christ. The gospel cometh to the elect of God, *not in word, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost*, and in much assurance, that they receive it *with joy of the Holy Ghost* (1 Thess. 1:5, 6). *The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, that giveth life*, (2 Cor. 3:6-8); *It is mighty through God* (2 Cor. 10:4). It dependeth not at all upon the power of our free-will, to make it successful for our conversion; but it conveyeth into the soul that life and power whereby we receive and obey it. Christ can make those that are dead in sin *to hear his voice and live* (John 5:25). Therefore he can speak to them by his gospel, and command them to repent and believe with good success, as well as he could say to the dead carcasses, "*Talitha cumi*" (Mark 5:41). "*Lazarus come forth*" (John 11:43, 44); and to the sick of the palsy, "*Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house,*" (Matt. 9:6).

Ninthly, there is no reason that the examples of heathen philosophers, or any Jews or Christians, by outward profession, that have lived without the saving knowledge of God in Christ, should move us, by their wise sayings and renowned attainments, in the practice of devotion and morality, to recede from this truth, that hath been so fully confirmed out of the holy scriptures. Have we not cause to judge that the apostle Paul, while he was a zealous Pharisee, and at least some few of the great multitudes of the Jews in his time, that were zealous for the law, and had the instruction of the holy scriptures, attained as near to that true holiness, as the heathen,

philosophers, or any others in their natural state? Yet Paul, after he was enlightened with the saving knowledge of Christ, judged himself the *chief of sinners*, in his former highest attainments; though, in the judgment of others, he was blameless touching the righteousness which is in the law: and he found it necessary to begin to live to God in a new way, by faith in Christ, and to suffer the *loss of all* his former attainments, and to count them but *dung*, that he might *win Christ* (1 Tim. 1:15; Phil. 3:6-8).

And none of the great multitude of Jews that followed after the *law of righteousness*, did ever attain unto it, while they sought it not *by faith in Christ* (Rom. 9:31, 32). What performances are greater, in outward appearance, than for a man to give all his goods to the poor, and to give his body to be burnt and yet the scripture alloweth us to suppose, that this may be done without true charity, and therefore without any true holiness of the heart and life, (1 Cor. 13:3). Men in a natural state may have strong conviction of the infinite power, wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, and of the judgment to come, and the everlasting happiness of the godly, and torments of the wicked: and those convictions may stir them up, not only to make a high profession, and to utter rare sayings concerning God and godliness; but also to labour, with great earnestness, to avoid all known sin, to subdue their lusts, to perform universal obedience to God in all known duties, and to serve him with their lives and estates to the utmost; and to extort out of their hearts some kind of love to God and godliness, that, if possible, they may escape the terrible torments of hell, and procure everlasting happiness by their endeavours: yet all their love to God is but forced and feigned; they have no hearty liking to God or his service; they account him a hard master, and his commands grievous, and they repine and fret inwardly at the burden of them; and were it not for fear of everlasting fire, they would little regard the enjoyment of God in heaven, and they would be glad if they might have the liberty to enjoy their lust without danger of damnation.

The highest preferment of those that are born only after the flesh, in Abraham's family, is but to *be children of the bond woman* (Gal. 4:23). And though they toil more in God's service than many of his dear children, yet God accepteth not their service, because their best performances are slavish, without any child like affections towards

God, and no better than glittering sins; and yet these natural men are not at all beholden to the goodness of their natures for these counterfeit shews of holiness, or for the least abstaining from the grossest sins. If God should leave men fully to their own natural corruptions, and to the power of Satan, (as they deserve) all shew of religion and morality would be quickly banished out of the world, and we should grow past feeling in wickedness, and like the cannibals, who are as good by nature as ourselves. But God, that can restrain the burning of the fiery furnace, without quenching it, and the flowing of water, without changing its nature, doth also restrain the working of natural corruption, without mortifying it; and through the greatness of his wisdom and power, *he maketh his enemies to yield unfeigned obedience to him* (Psa. 66:3); and to do many things good for the matter of them, though they can do nothing in a right holy manner. He hath appointed several means to restrain our corruptions: as the law, terrors of conscience, terrible judgments, and rewards in this life; magistrates, human laws, labour for necessaries, as food and raiment; and those gospel means that are effectual for sanctification, serve also for restraint of sin. God hath gracious ends in this restraint of sin, that his church may be preserved, and his gospel preached in the world; and that these natural men may be in a better capacity to receive the instructions of the gospel; and that such of them that are chosen, may in due time be converted; and that those of them that are not truly converted, may enjoy more of the goodness of God here, and suffer less torments hereafter. As vile and wicked as the world is, we have cause to praise and magnify the free goodness of God, that it is not worse.

The second of seven booklets.

