

STATE II.

THE STATE OF NATURE.

PART I.

THE SINFULNESS OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE.

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—GEN. vi. 5.

WE have seen what man was, as God made him ; a lovely and happy creature : let us view him now as he hath unmade himself ; and we shall see him a sinful and a miserable creature. This is the sad state we are brought into by the fall ; a state as black and doleful, as the former was glorious ; and this we commonly call “ The State of Nature ;” or “ Man’s Natural State ;” according to that of the apostle, Eph. ii. 3, “ And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”—And herein two things are to be considered : 1. The *sinfulness* ; 2. The *misery* of this state, in which all the unregenerate live. I begin with the *sinfulness* of man’s natural state, whereof the text gives us a full, though short account : “ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great,” &c.

The scope and design of these words are, to clear God’s justice in bringing the flood on the old world.—There are two particular causes taken notice of in the preceding verses : 1. Mixed marriages, verse 2, “ The sons of God,” the posterity of Seth and Enos, professors of the true religion, married with “ the daughters of men,” the profane, cursed race of Cain. They did not carry the matter before the Lord, that he might choose for them, Psalm xlviii. 14, but without any respect to the will of God, they chose, not according to the rules of their faith, but of their fancy ; they “ saw that they were fair ;” and their marriage with them occasioned their divorce from God. This was one of the causes of the deluge, which swept away the old world. Would to God that all professors in our day could plead not guilty : but though that sin brought on the deluge, yet the de-

luge hath not swept away that sin; which as of old, so in our day, may justly be looked upon as one of the causes of the decay of religion. It was an ordinary thing among the Pagans, to change their gods, as they changed their condition into a married lot: many sad instances the Christian world affords of the same; as if people were of Pharaoh's opinion, That religion is only for those who have no other care upon their heads, Exodus v. 17. 2. Great oppression, verse 4, "There were giants in the earth in those days;" men of great stature, great strength, and monstrous wickedness, "filling the earth with violence," verse 11. But neither their strength, nor treasures of wickedness, could profit them in the day of wrath. Yet the gain of oppression still causes many to forget the terror of this dreadful example. Thus much for the connexion, and what particular crimes that generation was guilty of. But every person that was swept away by the flood could not be guilty of these things; and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Therefore, in my text, there is a general indictment drawn up against them all, "The wickedness of man was great in the earth," &c. and clearly proved, for God saw it. Two things are here laid to their charge:

1. Corruption of life, *wickedness, great wickedness*. I understand this of the wickedness of their lives; for it is plainly distinguished from the wickedness of their hearts. The sins of their outward conversation were great in the nature of them, and greatly aggravated by their attendant circumstances: and this not only among those of the race of cursed Cain, but those of holy Seth; the wickedness of man was great. And then it is added, "in the earth:" 1. To vindicate God's severity, in that he not only cut off sinners, but defaced the beauty of the earth, and swept off the brute creatures from it, by the deluge; that as men had set the marks of their impiety, God might set the marks of his indignation, on the earth. 2. To shew the heinousness of their sin, in making the earth, which God had so adorned for the use of man, a sink of sin, and a stage whereon to act their wickedness, in defiance of Heaven. God saw this corruption of life: he not only knew it, and took notice of it, but he made them to know that he took notice of it, and that he had not forsaken the earth, though they had forsaken heaven.

2. Corruption of nature: *Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*. All their wicked practices are here traced to the fountain and spring-head: a corrupt heart was the source of all. The soul, which was made upright in all its faculties, is now wholly disordered. The heart, that was made according to God's own heart, is now the reverse of it, a forge of evil imagina-

tions, a sink of inordinate affections, and a storehouse of all impiety, Mark vii. 21, 22. Behold the heart of the natural man, as it is opened in our text. The mind is defiled; the thoughts of the heart are evil; the will and affections are defiled: the imagination of the thoughts of the heart, that is, whatsoever the heart frameth within itself by thinking, such as judgment, choice, purposes, devices, desires, every inward motion, or rather the frame of the thoughts of the heart, namely the frame, make, or mould of these, 1 Chron. xxix. 18, is evil. Yea, and every imagination, every frame of his thoughts, is so. The heart is ever framing something; but never one right thing: the frame of thoughts, in the heart of man, is exceedingly various; yet are they never cast into a right frame. But is there not, at least, a mixture of good in them? No, they are only evil; there is nothing in them truly good and acceptable to God: nor can any thing be so, that comes out of that forge; where, not the Spirit of God, but "the prince of the power of the air, worketh," Eph. ii. 2. Whatever changes may be found in them, are only from evil to evil; for the imagination of the heart, or frame of thoughts in natural men, is evil continually, or every day. From the first day to the last day, in this state, they are in midnight darkness; there is not the glimmering of the light of holiness in them; not one holy thought can ever be produced by the unholy heart. O what a vile heart is this! O what a corrupt nature is this! The tree that always brings forth fruit, but never good fruit, whatever soil it be set in, whatever pains be taken with it, must naturally be an evil tree: and what can that heart be, whereof every imagination, every set of thoughts, is only evil, and that continually? Surely that corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk deep into our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace. Now such is man's heart, such is his nature, till regenerating grace change it. God that searcheth the heart saw man's heart was so, he took special notice of it: and the faithful and true Witness cannot mistake our case; though we are most apt to mistake ourselves in this point, and generally overlook it.

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart saying, What is that to us? Let that generation of whom the text speaks, see to that. For the Lord has left the case of that generation on record, to be a looking-glass to all after generations, wherein they may see their own corruption of heart, and what their lives would be too, if he restrained them not: for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man," Prov. xxvii. 19. Adam's fall has framed all men's hearts alike in this matter. Hence the

apostle, Rom. iii. 10—18, proves the corruption of the nature, hearts, and lives of all men, from what the psalmist says of the wicked in his day, Psalm xiv. 1—3; Psalm. v. 9; Psalm cxl. 3; Psalm x. 7; Psalm xxxvi. 1; and from what Jeremiah saith of the wicked in his day, Jer. ix. 3, and from what Isaiah says of those that lived in his time, Isa. lvii. 7, 8, and concludes, verse 19, “Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” Had the history of the deluge been transmitted unto us, without the reason thereof in the text, we might thence have gathered the corruption and total depravity of man’s nature: for what other quarrel could the holy and just God have with the infants that were destroyed by the flood, seeing they had no actual sin? If we saw a wise man, who having made a curious piece of work, and heartily approved of it when he gave it out of his hand, as fit for the use it was designed for, rise up in wrath and break it all in pieces, when he looked on it afterwards; should we not thence conclude that the frame of it had been quite marred since it came out of his hand, and that it does not serve for the use it was at first designed for? How much more, when we see the holy and wise God destroying the work of his own hands, once solemnly pronounced by him very good, may we not conclude that the original frame thereof is utterly marred, that it cannot be mended, but must needs be new made, or lost altogether? Gen. vi. 6, 7, “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said, I will destroy man,” or blot him out; as a man doth a sentence out of a book, that cannot be corrected by cutting off some letters, syllables, or words, and interlining others here and there, but must needs be wholly new framed. But did the deluge carry off this corruption of man’s nature? did it mend the matter? No, it did not. God, in his holy providence, “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the new “world may become guilty before God,” as well as the old, permits that corruption of nature to break out in Noah, the father of the new world, after the deluge was over. Behold him, as another Adam, sinning in the fruit of a tree, Gen. ix. 20, 21, “He planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent.” More than that, God gives the same reason against a new deluge, which he gives in our text for bringing that on the old world: “I will not,” saith he, “again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” Gen. viii. 21. Whereby it is intimated, that there is no mending of the matter by this means;

and that if he should always take the same course with men that he had done, he would be always sending deluges on the earth, seeing the corruption of man's nature still remains. But though the flood could not carry off the corruption of nature, yet it pointed at the way how it is to be done; to wit, that men must be "born of water and of the Spirit," raised from spiritual death in sin by the grace of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood; out of which a new world of saints arise in regeneration, even as the new world of sinners out of the waters, where they had long lain buried, as it were, in the ark. This we learn from 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21, where the apostle, speaking of Noah's ark, saith, "Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." Now the waters of the deluge being a like figure to baptism, it plainly follows, that they signified as baptism doth "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." To conclude then, those waters, though now dried up, may serve us still for a looking-glass, in which we may see the total corruption of our nature, and the necessity of regeneration.

From the text, thus explained, this weighty point of doctrine arises, which he that runs may read in it, namely, Man's nature is now wholly corrupted. There is a sad alteration, a wonderful overturning in the nature of man: where, at first, there was nothing evil, now there is nothing good.—In treating on this doctrine, I shall,

I. Confirm it.

II. Represent this corruption of nature in its several parts.

III. Shew you how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted.

IV. Apply this doctrine.

I. I shall confirm the doctrine of the corruption of nature.

I shall hold the glass to your eyes, wherein you may see your sinful nature; which, though God takes particular notice of it, many quite overlook. Here we shall consult the word of God, and men's experience and observation.

For scripture-proof, let us consider,

1. How the scripture takes particular notice of fallen Adam's communicating his image to his posterity, Gen. v. 3, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth." Compare with this the first verse of that chapter, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Behold here, how the image after which man was made, and the image after which he is begotten, are opposed. Man was created in the likeness of God; that is, the holy and righteous God made a holy and righteous creature; but fallen Adam begat a son, not in

the likeness of God, but in his own likeness; that is, corrupt sinful Adam begat a corrupt sinful son. For as the image of God bore righteousness and immortality in it, as was shewn before; so this image of fallen Adam bore corruption and death in it, 1 Cor. xv. 49, 50, compare verse 22. Moses, in that fifth chapter of Genesis, giving us the first bill of mortality that ever was in the world, ushers it in with this, that dying Adam begat mortals. Having sinned, he became mortal, according to the threatening; and so he begat a son in his own likeness, sinful, and therefore mortal. Thus sin and death passed on all. Doubtless he begat both Cain and Abel in his own likeness, as well as Seth. But it is not recorded of Abel; because he left no issue behind him, and his falling the first sacrifice to death in the world, was a sufficient document of it: nor of Cain, to whom it might have been thought peculiar, because of his monstrous wickedness; and besides, his posterity was drowned in the flood: but it is recorded of Seth, because he was the father of the holy seed; and from him all mankind since the flood have descended, and fallen Adam's own likeness with them.

2. It appears from that text of Scripture, Job xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Our first parents were unclean, how then can we be clean? How could our immediate parents be clean? how can our children be so? The uncleanness here referred to, is a sinful uncleanness; for it is such as makes man's days full of trouble: and it is natural, being derived from unclean parents: "Man is born of a woman," ver. 1, "And how can he be clean, that is born of a woman?" Job xxv. 4. The omnipotent God, whose power is not here challenged, could bring a clean thing out of an unclean, and so did in the case of the man Christ: but no other being can. Every person that is born according to the course of nature is born unclean. If the root be corrupt, so must the branches be. Neither is the matter mended, though the parents be sanctified ones; for they are but holy in part, and that by grace, not by nature! and they beget their children as men, not as holy men. Wherefore as the circumcised parent begets an uncircumcised child, and after the purest grain is sown, we reap chaff with the corn; so the holiest parent begets unholy children, and cannot communicate their grace to them, as they do their nature; which many godly parents find true, in their sad experience.

3. Consider the confession of the psalmist David, Psalm. li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Here he ascends from his actual sin, to the fountain of it, namely, corrupt nature. He was a man according to God's own heart; but from the beginning it was not so with him. He was

begotten in lawful marriage: but when the lump was shaken in the womb, it was a sinful lump. Hence the corruption of nature is called the "old man;" being as old as ourselves, older than grace, even in those that are sanctified from the womb.

4. Hear our Lord's determination of the point, John iii. 6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Behold the universal corruption of mankind—all are flesh! Not that all are frail, though that is a sad truth too: yea, and our natural frailty is an evidence of our natural corruption; but that is not the sense of the text: the meaning of it is—all are corrupt and sinful, and that naturally. Hence our Lord argues, that because they are flesh, therefore they must be born again, or else they cannot enter into the kingdom of God, vers. 3—5. And as the corruption of our nature shews the absolute necessity of regeneration, so the absolute necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature; for why should a man need a second birth, if his nature were not quite mared in his first birth?

5. Man certainly is sunk very low now, in comparison of what he once was. God made him but a "little lower than the angels:" but now we find him likened to the beasts that perish. He hearkened to a brute, and is now become like one of them. Like Nebuchadnezzar, his portion in his natural state is with the beasts, "minding only earthly things," Phil. iii. 19. Nay, brutes, in some sort, have the advantage of the natural man, who is sunk a degree below them. He is more negligent of what concerns him most, than the stork, or the turtle, or the crane, or the swallow, in what is for their interest, Jer. viii. 7. He is more stupid than the ox or ass, Isa. i. 3. I find him sent to school to learn of the ant, which has no guide or leader to go before her; no overseer or officer to compel or stir her up to work; no ruler, but may do as she lists, being under the dominion of none; yet "provideth her meat in the summer and harvest," Prov. vi. 6—8; while the natural man hath all these, and yet exposeth himself to eternal starving. Nay, more than all this, the Scriptures hold out the natural man, not only as wanting the good qualities of these creatures, but as a compound of the evil qualities of the worst of the creatures; in whom the fierceness of the lion, the craft of the fox, the unteachableness of the wild ass, the filthiness of the dog and swine, the poison of the asp, and such like, meet. Truth itself calls them "serpents, a generation of vipers;" yea, more, even "children of the devil," Matt. xxiii. 33; John viii. 44. Surely, then, man's nature is miserably corrupted.

6. "We are by nature the children of wrath," Eph. ii. 3.—We are worthy of, and liable to, the wrath of God; and this by nature:

therefore, doubtless, we are by nature sinful creatures. We are condemned before we have done good or evil; under the curse, before we know what it is. But, "will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey?" Amos iii. 4; that is, will the holy and just God roar in his wrath against man, if he be not, by his sin, made a prey for his wrath? No, he will not; he cannot. Let us conclude then, that, according to the word of God, man's nature is a corrupt nature.

If we consult experience, and observe the case of the world, in those things that are obvious to any person who will not shut his eyes against clear light, we shall quickly perceive such fruits as discover this root of bitterness. I shall propose a few things that may serve to convince us in this point:—

1. Who sees not a flood of miseries overflowing the world? Whither can a man go where he shall not dip his foot, if he go not over head and ears, in it? Every one at home and abroad, in city and country, in palaces and cottages, is groaning under some one thing or other, ungrateful to him. Some are oppressed with poverty, some chastened with sickness and pain, some are lamenting their losses, every one has a cross of one sort or another. No man's condition is so soft, but there is some thorn of uneasiness in it. At length death, the wages of sin, comes after these its harbingers, and sweeps all away.—Now, what but sin has opened the sluice of sorrow? There is not a complaint nor sigh heard in the world, nor a tear that falls from our eye, but it is an evidence that man is fallen as a star from heaven; for God distributeth sorrows in his anger, Job xxi. 17. This is a plain proof of the corruption of nature: forasmuch as those who have not yet actually sinned, have their share of these sorrows; yea, and draw their first breath in the world weeping, as if they knew this world at first sight to be a Bochim, the place of weepers. There are graves of the smallest, as well as of the largest size, in the churchyard; and there are never wanting some in the world, who are, like Rachel, weeping for their children because they are not, Mat. ii. 18.

2. Observe how early this corruption of nature begins to appear in young ones. Solomon observes, that "even a child is known by his doings," Prov. xx. 11. It may soon be discerned what way the bias of the heart lies. Do not the children of fallen Adam, before they can go alone, follow their father's footsteps? What a vast deal of little pride, ambition, sinful curiosity, vanity, wilfulness, and averseness to good, appears in them? And, when they creep out of infancy, there is a necessity of using the rod of correction, to drive away the foolishness that is bound in their hearts, Prov. xx. 15, which shews, that, if grace prevail not, the child will be as Ishmael—"a wild ass-man," as the word is, Gen. xvi. 12.

3. Take a view of the manifold gross outbreakings of sin in the world: the wickedness of man is yet great in the earth. Behold thy bitter fruits of the corruption of our nature, Hosea iv. 2. "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, like the breaking forth of waters, and blood toucheth blood." The world is filled with filthiness, and all manner of lewdness, wickedness, and profanity. From whence comes the deluge of sin on the earth, but from the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, the heart of man? out of which proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, &c. Mark vii. 21, 22. You will, it may be, thank God with a whole heart, that you are not like other men; and indeed you have more reason for it than, I fear, you are aware of; for, as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man, Prov. xxvii. 19. As, looking into clear water, you see your own face; so, looking into your heart, you may see other men's there; and, looking into other men's, in them you may see your own. So that the most vile and profane wretches that are in the world, should serve you for a looking-glass; in which you ought to discern the corruption of your own nature: and if you were to do so, you would, with a heart truly touched, thank God, and not yourselves, indeed, that you are not as other men in your lives; seeing the corruption of nature is the same in you as in them.

4. Cast your eye upon those terrible convulsions which the world is thrown into by the lusts of men! Lions make not a prey of lions, nor wolves of wolves: but men are turned lions and wolves to one another, biting and devouring one another. Upon how slight occasions will men sheath their swords in one another! The world is a wilderness, where the clearest fire that men can carry about with them will not frighten away the wild beasts that inhabit it, and that because they are men, and not brutes; but one way or other they will be wounded. Since Cain shed the blood of Abel, the earth has been turned into a slaughter-house; and the chase has been continued, since Nimrod began his hunting; on the earth, as in the sea, the greater still devouring the lesser. When we see the world in such a ferment, every one attacking another with words or swords, we may conclude there is an evil spirit among them. These violent heats among Adam's sons, shew the whole body to be distempered, the whole head to be sick, and the whole heart to be faint. They surely proceed from an inward cause, James iv. 1, "lusts that war in our members."

5. Consider the necessity of human laws, guarded by terrors and severities; to which we may apply what the apostle says, 1 Tim

i. 9, that "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," &c. Man was made for society; and God himself said of the first man, when he had created him, that it was "not meet he should be alone;" yet the case is such now, that, in society, he must be hedged in with thorns. And that from hence we may the better see the corruption of man's nature, let us consider—1. Every man naturally loves to be at full liberty himself; to have his own will for his law; and, if he were to follow his natural inclinations, he would vote himself out of the reach of all laws, divine and human. Hence some, the power of whose hands has been answerable to their natural inclination, have indeed made themselves absolute, and above laws; agreeably to man's monstrous design at first, to be as gods, Gen. iii. 5. Yet—2. There is no man that would willingly adventure to live in a lawless society: therefore even pirates and robbers have laws among themselves, though the whole society casts off all respect to law and right. Thus men discover themselves to be conscious of the corruption of nature; not daring to trust one another, but upon security. 3. How dangerous soever it is to break through the hedge, yet the violence of lust makes many daily adventure to run the risk. They will not only sacrifice their credit and conscience, which last is lightly esteemed in the world; but for the pleasure of a few moments, immediately succeeded with terror from within, they will lay themselves open to a violent death by the laws of the land wherein they live. 4. The laws are often made to yield to men's lusts. Sometimes whole societies run into such extravagances, that, like a company of prisoners, they break off their fetters, and put their guard to flight; and the voice of laws cannot be heard for the noise of arms. And seldom is there a time, wherein there are not some persons so great and daring, that the laws dare not look their impetuous lusts in the face; which made David say, in the case of Joab, who had murdered Abner, "These men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me," 2 Sam. iii. 39. Lusts sometimes grow too strong for laws, so that the law becomes slack, as the pulse of a dying man. Hab. i. 3, 4. 5. Consider, what necessity often appears of amending old laws, and making new ones; which have their rise from new crimes, of which man's nature is very fruitful. There would be no need of mending the hedge, if men were not, like unruly beasts, still breaking it down. It is astonishing to see what a figure the Israelites, who were separated unto God from among all the nations of the earth, make in their history; what horrible confusions were among them, when there was no king in Israel, as you may see from the eighteenth to the

twenty-first chapter of Judges: how hard it was to reform them, when they had the best of magistrates! and how quickly they turned aside again, when they got wicked rulers! I cannot but think, that one grand design of that sacred history, was to discover the corruption of man's nature, the absolute need of the Messiah, and his grace; and that we ought, in reading it, to improve it to that end. How cutting is that word which the Lord has to Samuel, concerning Saul, 1 Sam. ix. 17, "The same shall reign over"—or, as the word is, *shall restrain*—"my people." O the corruption of man's nature! the awe and dread of the God of heaven restrains them not; but they must have gods on earth to do it, "to put them to shame," Judg. xviii. 7.

6. Consider the remains of that natural corruption in the saints. Though grace has entered, yet corruption is not expelled: though they have got the new creature, yet much of the old corrupt nature remains; and these struggle together within them, as the twins in Rebekah's womb, Gal. v. 17. They find it present with them at all times, and in all places, even in the most retired corners. If a man has a troublesome neighbour, he may remove; if he has an ill servant, he may put him away at the term; if a bad yoke-fellow, he may sometimes leave the house, and be free from molestation that way: but should the saint go into a wilderness, or set up his tent on some remote rock in the sea, where never foot of man, beast, or fowl had touched, there will it be with him. Should he be with Paul, caught up to the third heavens, it will come back with him, 2 Cor. xii. 7. It follows him as the shadow doth the body; it makes a blot in the fairest line he can draw. It is like the fig-tree on the wall, which however nearly it was cut, yet still grew, till the wall was thrown down: for the roots of it are fixed in the heart, while the saint is in the world, as with bands of iron and brass. It is especially active when he would do good, Rom. vii. 21, then the fowls come down upon the carcasses. Hence often, in holy duties, the spirit of a saint, as it were, evaporates; and he is left before he is aware, like Michal, with an image in the bed instead of a husband. I need not stand to prove to the godly the corruption of nature in them, for they groan under it; and to prove it to them, were to hold out a candle to let them see the sun: as for the wicked, they are ready to account mole-hills in the saints as big as mountains, if not reckon them all hypocrites. But consider these few things on this head: 1. "If it be thus in the green tree how must it be in the dry?" The saints are not born saints, but made so by the power of regenerating grace. Have they got a new nature, and yet the old remains with them?

How great must that corruption be in others, in whom there is no grace! 2. The saints groan under it, as a heavy burden. Hear the apostle, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—What though the carnal man lives at ease and quiet, and the corruption of nature is not his burden, is he therefore free from it? No, no; it is because he is dead, that he feels not the sinking weight. Many a groan is heard from a sick bed, but never any from a grave. In the saint, as in the sick man, there is a mighty struggle; life and death striving for the mastery: but in the natural man, as in the dead corpse, there is no noise; because death bears full sway. 3. The godly man resists the old corrupt nature; he strives to mortify it, yet it remains; he endeavours to starve it, and by that means to weaken it, yet it is active: how must it spread then, and strengthen itself in that soul, where it is not starved, but fed!—And this is the case of all the unregenerate, who make "provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." If the garden of the diligent afford him new work daily, in cutting off and rooting up, surely that of the slug-gard must needs be "all grown over with thorns."

7. I shall add but one observation more; and that is, that in every man, naturally, the image of fallen Adam appears. Some children, by the features and lineaments of their face, do, as it were, father themselves: and thus we resemble our first parents. Every one of us bears the image and impression of the fall upon him: and to evince the truth of this, I appeal to the consciences of all, in these following particulars:

1. Is not sinful curiosity natural to us? and is not this a print of Adam's image? Gen. iii. 6. Is not man naturally much more desirous to know new things, than to practise old known truths? How much like old Adam do we look in this eagerness for novelties, and disrelish of old solid doctrines? We seek after knowledge rather than holiness, and study most to know those things which are least edifying. Our wild and roving fancies need a bridle to curb them, while good solid affections must be quickened and spurred on.

2. If the Lord, by his holy law and wise providence, puts a restraint upon us, to keep us back from any thing, does not that restraint whet the edge of our natural inclinations, and makes us so much the keener in our desires? And in this do we not betray it plainly, that we are Adam's children? Gen. iii. 2—6. I think this cannot be denied; for daily observation evinces, that it is a natural principle, that "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant," Prov. ix. 17. The very heathens were convinced, that man was possessed with this spirit of contradiction, though they

knew not the spring of it. How often do men let themselves loose in those things, in which, had God left them at liberty, they would have bound up themselves! but corrupt nature takes a pleasure in the very jumping over the hedge. And is it not a repeating of our fathers' folly, that men will rather climb for forbidden fruit, than gather what is shaken off the tree of good providence to them, when they have God's express allowance for it?

3. Which of all the children of Adam is not naturally disposed to hear the instruction that causeth to err? And was not this the rock our first parents split upon? Gen. iii. 4—6. How apt is weak man, ever since that time, to parley with temptations! "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not," Job xxxiii. 14, but he readily listens to Satan. Men might often come fair off, if they would dismiss temptations with abhorrence, when first they appear; if they would nip them in the bud, they would soon die away: but, alas! though we see the train laid for us, and the fire put to it, yet we stand till it runs along, and we are blown up with its force.

4. Do not the eyes in your head often blind the eyes of the mind? And was not this the very case of our first parents? Gen. iii. 6. Man is never more blind than when he is looking on the objects that are most pleasing to sense. Since the eyes of our first parents were opened to the forbidden fruit, men's eyes have been the gates of destruction to their souls; at which impure imaginations and sinful desires have entered the heart, to the wounding of the soul, wasting of the conscience, and bringing dismal effects sometimes on whole societies, as in Achan's case, Joshua vii. 21. Holy Job was aware of this danger, from these two little rolling bodies, which a very small splinter of wood can make useless; so that, with the king who durst not, with his ten thousand, meet him that came with twenty thousand against him, Luke xiv. 31, 32, he sendeth and desireth conditions of peace: Job xxxi. 1, "I made a covenant with mine eyes," &c.

5. Is it not natural to us to care for the body, even at the expense of the soul? This was one ingredient in the sin of our first parents, Gen. iii. 6. O how happy might we be, if we were but at half the pains about our souls, that we bestow upon our bodies! If that question, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30, ran but near as often through our minds as these questions do, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Matt. vi. 31, then many a hopeless case would become very hopeful. But the truth is, most men live as if they were nothing but a lump of flesh: or as if their soul served for no other

use, but, like salt, to keep their body from corrupting. "They are flesh," John iii. 6; "they mind the things of the flesh," Rom. viii. 5; "and they live after the flesh," ver. 13. If the consent of the flesh be got to an action, the consent of the conscience is rarely waited for: yea, the body is often served, when the conscience has entered a protest against it.

6. Is not every one by nature discontented with his present lot in the world, or with some one thing or other in it? This also was Adam's case, Gen. iii. 5, 6. Some one thing is always wanting; so that man is a creature given to changes. If any doubt this, let them look over all their enjoyment; and, after a review of them, listen to their own hearts, and they will hear a secret murmuring for want of something; though perhaps, if they considered the matter aright, they would see that it is better for them to want than to have that something. Since the hearts of our first parents flew out at their eyes, on the forbidden fruit, and a night of darkness was thereby brought on the world, their posterity have a natural disease which Solomon calls, "The wandering of the desire," or, as the word is, "The walking of thy soul," Eccl. vi. 9. This is a sort of diabolical trance, wherein the soul traverses the world; feeds itself with a thousand airy nothings; snatches at this and the other created excellency, in imagination and desire; goes here, and there, and every where, except where it should go. And the soul is never cured of this disease, till conquering grace brings it back to take up its everlasting rest in God through Christ: but till this be, if man were set again in paradise, the garden of the Lord, all the pleasures there would not keep him from looking, yea, and leaping over the hedge a second time.

7. Are we not far more easily impressed and influenced by evil councils and examples, than by those that are good! You will see this was the ruin of Adam, Gen. iii. 6. Evil example, to this day, is one of Satan's master-devices to ruin men. Though we have, by nature, more of the fox than of the lamb; yet that ill property which some observe in this creature, namely, that if one lamb skip into a water, the rest near will suddenly follow, may be observed also in the disposition of the children of men; to whom it is very natural to embrace an evil way, because they see others in it before them. Ill example has frequently the force of a violent stream, to carry us over plain duty; but especially if the example be given by those we bear a great affection to; our affection, in that case, blinds our judgment; and what we should abhor in others, is complied with, to humour them. Nothing is more plain, than that generally men choose rather to do what the most do, than what the best do.

8. Who of all Adam's sons needs be taught the art of sewing fig-leaves together, to cover their nakedness? Genesis iii. 7. When we have ruined ourselves, and made ourselves naked to our shame, we naturally seek to help ourselves, by ourselves: many poor contrivances are employed, as silly and insignificant as Adam's fig-leaves. What pains are men at, to cover their sin from their own conscience, and to draw all the fair colours upon it that they can! And when once convictions are fastened upon them, so that they cannot but see themselves naked, it is as natural for them to attempt to cover it by self-deceit, as for fish to swim in water, or birds to fly in the air. Therefore the first question of the convinced is, "What shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. How shall we qualify ourselves? What shall we perform? Not considering that the new creature is God's own workmanship or deed, Eph. ii. 10, any more than Adam considered and thought of being clothed with the skins of sacrifices, Gen. iii. 21.

9. Do not Adam's children naturally follow his footsteps, in hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord? Gen. iii. 8. We are quite as blind in this matter as he was, who thought to hide himself from the presence of God amongst the shady trees of the garden. We are very apt to promise ourselves more security in a secret sin, than in one that is openly committed. "The eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me," Job xxiv. 15. Men will freely do that in secret, which they would be ashamed to do in the presence of a child; as if darkness could hide from the all-seeing God. Are we not naturally careless of communion with God; ay, and averse to it? Never was there any communion between God and Adam's children, where the Lord himself had not the first word. If he were to let them alone they would never inquire after him. Isa. lvii. 17, "I hid me." Did he seek after a hiding God? Very far from it: "He went on in the way of his heart."

10. How loth are men to confess sin, to take guilt and shame to themselves? Was it not thus in the case before us? Gen. iii. 10. Adam confesses his nakedness, which could not be denied; but says not one word of his sin: the reason of it was, he would fain have hid it if he could. It is as natural for us to hide sin, as to commit it. Many sad instances thereof we have in this world; but a far clearer proof of it we shall get at the day of judgment, the day in which "God will judge the secrets of men," Rom. ii. 16. Many a foul mouth will then be seen which is now "wiped, and saith, I have done no wickedness," Prov. xxx. 20.

11. Is it not natural for us to extenuate our sin, and transfer the guilt upon others? When God examined our guilty first parents,

did not Adam lay the blame on the woman? and did not the woman lay the blame on the serpent? Gen. iii. 12, 13. Now Adam's children need not be taught this hellish policy; for before they can well speak if they cannot get the fact denied, they will cunningly lisp out something to lessen their fault, and lay the blame upon another. Nay, so natural is this to men, that in the greatest sins, they will lay the fault upon God himself; they will blaspheme his holy providence under the mistaken name of misfortune or ill luck, and thereby lay the blame of their sin at heaven's door. And was not this one of Adam's tricks after his fall? Gen. iii. 12, "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Observe the order of the speech. He makes his apology in the first place; and then comes his confession: his apology is long; but his confession very short; it is all comprehended in one word, "and I did eat." How pointed and distinct is his apology, as if he was afraid his meaning should have been mistaken! "The woman," says he, or "that woman," as if he would have pointed the judge to his own works, of which we read, Gen. ii. 22. There was but one woman then in the world; so that one would think he needed not to have been so nice and exact in pointing at her: yet she is as carefully marked out in his defence, as if there had been ten thousand. "The woman whom thou gavest me:" here he speaks, as if he had been ruined with God's gift. And, to make the gift look the blacker, it is added to all this, "thou gavest to be with me," as my constant companion, to stand by me as a helper. This looks as if Adam would have fathered an ill design upon the Lord, in giving him this gift. And, after all, there is a new demonstrative here, before the sentence is complete; he says not, "The woman gave me," but "the woman she gave me," emphatically; as if he had said, *she*, even *she*, gave me of the tree. This much for his apology. But his confession is quickly over, in one word, as he spoke it, "and I did eat." There is nothing here to point out himself, and as little to shew what he had eaten. How natural is this black art to Adam's posterity! he that runs may read it. So universally does Solomon's observation hold true, Prov. xix. 3, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord." Let us then call fallen Adam, father; let us not deny the relation, seeing we bear his image.

To shut up this point, sufficiently confirmed by concurring evidence from the Lord's word, our own experience, and observation; let us be persuaded to believe the doctrine of the corruption of our nature; and look to the second Adam, the blessed Jesus, for the

application of his precious blood, to remove the guilt of our sin ; and for the efficacy of his Holy Spirit, to make us new creatures ; knowing that “ except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

I. I proceed to inquire into the *corruption of nature* in the several parts thereof. But who can comprehend it ? who can take the exact dimensions of it, in its breadth, length, height, and depth ? “ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ? ” Jer. xvii. 9. However, we may quickly perceive as much of it as may be matter of deepest humiliation, and may discover to us the absolute necessity of regeneration. Man in his natural state is altogether corrupt : both soul and body are polluted, as the apostle proves at large, Rom. iii. 10—18. As for the soul, this natural corruption has spread itself through all the faculties thereof ; and is to be found in the *understanding*, the *will*, the *affections*, the *conscience*, and the *memory*.

I. *Of the Corruption of the Understanding.*

The *understanding*, that leading faculty, is despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. We have fallen into the hands of our grand adversary, as Samson into the hands of the Philistines, and are deprived of our two eyes. “ There is none that understandeth,” Rom. iii. 11. “ Mind and conscience are defiled,” Tit. i. 15. The natural man’s apprehension of divine things is corrupt. Psalm l. 21, Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.” His judgment is corrupt, and cannot, be otherwise, seeing his eye is evil : therefore the scriptures, to show that man does all wrong, says, “ every one did that which was right in his own eyes,” Judges xvii. 6 ; and xxi. 25. And his imaginations, or reasonings, must be cast down by the power of the word, being of a piece with his judgment, 2 Cor. x. 5. But, to point out this corruption of the mind or understanding more particularly, let these following things be considered :

1. There is a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things. The apostle determines concerning every one that is not endued with the graces of the Spirit, “ That he is blind, and cannot see afar off,” 2 Pet. i. 9. Hence the Spirit of God in the scriptures clothes, as it were, divine truths with earthly figures, even as parents teach their children, using similitudes, Hosea xii. 11. This, though it doth not cure, yet it proves this natural weakness in the minds of men. But there are not wanting plain proofs of it from experience. As, 1. How hard a task is it to teach many

people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truths so plain as they may understand them? There must be "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line." Isa. xxviii. 10. Try the same persons in other things, they will be found "wiser in their generation than the children of light." They understand their work and business in the world as well as their neighbours; though they are very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God. Tell them how they may advance their worldly wealth, or how they may gratify their lusts, and they will quickly understand these things; though it is very hard to make them know how their souls may be saved, or how their hearts may find rest in Jesus Christ. 2. Consider those who have many advantages beyond the generality of mankind; who have had the benefits of good education and instruction; yea, and are blessed with the light of grace in that measure wherein it is ascribed to the saints on earth; yet how small a portion have they of the knowledge of divine things! What ignorance and confusion still remain in their minds! How often are they perplexed even as to practical truths, and speak as children in these things! It is a pitiful weakness that we cannot perceive the things which God has revealed to us; and it must needs be a sinful weakness, since the law of God requires us to know and believe them. 3. What dangerous mistakes are to be found amongst men, in concerns of the greatest weight! What woful delusions prevail over them! Do we not often see those, who in other things are the wisest of men, the most notorious fools with respect to their soul's interest? Matt. ix. 25, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." Many that are eagle-eyed in the trifles of time, are like owls and bats in the light of life. Nay, truly, the life of every natural man is but one continued dream and delusion, out of which he never awakes, till either, by a new light darted from heaven into his soul, he come to himself, Luke xv. 17, or, in hell he lift up his eyes," chap. xv. 23. Therefore, in scripture account, though he be ever so wise, he is a fool, and a simple one.

2. Man's understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things. Man, at the instigation of the devil, attempting to break out a new light in his mind, Gen. iii. 5, instead of that, broke up the doors of the bottomless pit, so as, by the smoke thereof, to be buried in darkness. When God first made man, his mind was a lamp of light; but now, when he comes to make him over again, in regeneration, he finds it darkness; Eph. v. 8, "Ye were sometimes darkness." Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region: it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The

prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, who are not born again. That you may be convinced in this matter, take the following proofs of it :

Proof 1. The darkness that was upon the face of the world, before, and at the time when Christ came, arising as the Sun of Righteousness upon the earth. When Adam by his sin had lost that primitive light with which he was endued at his creation, it pleased God to make a glorious revelation of his mind and will to him, as to the way of salvation, Gen. iii. 15. This was handed down by him, and other godly fathers, before the flood : yet the natural darkness of the mind of man prevailed so far against that revelation, as to carry off all sense of true religion from the old world, except what remained in Noah's family, which was preserved in the ark. After the flood, as men multiplied on the earth, the natural darkness of the mind prevailed again, and the light decayed, till it died away among the generality of mankind, and was preserved only among the posterity of Shem. And even with them it had nearly set, when God called Abraham from serving other gods, Joshua xxiv. 15. God gives Abraham a more full and clear revelation, which he communicates to his family, Genesis xviii. 19 ; yet the natural darkness wears it out at length, save that it was preserved among the posterity of Jacob. They being carried down into Egypt, that darkness so prevailed, as to leave them very little sense of true religion ; and there was a necessity for a new revelation to be made to them in the wilderness. And many a cloud of darkness got above that, now and then, during the time from Moses to Christ. When Christ came, the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, and the true light with them, were within an enclosure, Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20. Between them and the Gentile world, there was a partition wall of God's making, namely, the ceremonial law : and upon that was reared up another of man's own making, namely, a rooted enmity betwixt the parties, Eph. ii. 14, 15. If we look abroad without the enclosure, and except those proselytes of the Gentiles, who by means of some rays of light breaking forth upon them from within the enclosure, having renounced idolatry, worshipped the true God, but did conform to the Mosaical rites, we see nothing but "dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty," Psalm lxxiv. 20. Gross darkness covered the face of the Gentile world, and the way of salvation was utterly unknown among them. They were drowned in superstition and idolatry, and had multiplied their idols to such a vast number, that above thirty

thousand are reckoned to have been worshipped by the men of Europe alone. Whatever wisdom was among their philosophers, "the world by" that "wisdom knew not God," 1 Cor. i. 21, and all their researches in religion were but groping in the dark, Acts xvii. 27. If we look within the enclosure, and except a few that were groaning and "waiting for the consolation of Israel," we shall see gross darkness on the face of that generation. Though "to them were committed the oracles of God," yet they were most corrupt in their doctrine. Their traditions were multiplied; but the knowledge of those things, wherein the life of religion lies, was lost. Masters of Israel knew not the nature and necessity of regeneration, John iii. 10. Their religion was to build on their birth-privileges, as children of Abraham, Matth. iii. 9, to glory in their circumcision, and other external ordinances, Phil. iii. 2, 3, and to "rest in the law," Rom. ii. 17, after they had, by their false glosses, cut it so short, as they might outwardly go well nigh to the fulfilling of it, Matth. v.

Thus was darkness over the face of the world, when Christ, the true light, came into it; and so is darkness over every soul, till he as the day-star, arises in the heart. The latter is an evidence of the former. What, but the natural darkness of men's minds, could still thus wear out the light of external revelation, in a matter upon which eternal happiness depends? Men did not forget the way of preserving their lives: but how quickly they lost the knowledge of the way of salvation of their souls, which are of infinitely more weight and worth? When the teaching of patriarchs and prophets was ineffectual, it became necessary for them to be taught of God himself, who alone can open the eyes of the understanding. But that it might appear that the corruption of man's mind lay deeper than to be cured by mere external revelation, there were but very few converted by Christ's preaching, who spoke as never man spoke," John xii. 37, 38. The great cure remained to be performed, by the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the apostles; who according to the promise John. xiv. 12, were to do greater works. And if we look to the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, we shall find, that by applying the remedy to the soul, for the cure of bodily distempers as in the case of "the man sick of the palsy," Matth. ix. 2, he plainly discovered, that his main errand into the world was to cure the diseases of the soul. I find a miracle wrought upon one that was born blind, performed in such a way, as seems to have been designed to let the world see it, as in a glass, their case and cure, John ix. 6, "He made clay, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." What could more fitly represent the blindness of men's minds, than eyes closed up with earth? Isa. vi.

10, "shut your eyes;" shut them up by anointing, or "casting them with mortar," as the word will bear. And chap. xlv. 18, "He hath shut their eyes:" the word properly signifies, he hath plastered their eyes; as the house in which the leprosy had been, was to be plastered, Lev. xiv. 42. Thus the Lord's word discovers the design of that strange work; and by it, shews us, that the eyes of our understanding are naturally shut. Then the blind man must go and wash off this clay in the pool of Siloam: no other water will serve this purpose. If that pool had not represented him, whom the Father sent into the world to open the blind eyes, Isa. xlii. 7, I think the evangelist had not given us the interpretation of the name which he says, signifies *sent*, John ix. 7. So we may conclude, that the natural darkness of our minds is such as there is no cure for, but from the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, whose eye-salve only can make us see, Rev. iii. 18.

Proof 2. Every natural man's heart and life is a mass of darkness, disorder, and confusion, how refined soever he may appear in the sight of men. "For we ourselves also," saith the apostle Paul, "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," Tit. iii. 3; and yet, at the time which this text refers to, he was blameless, "touching the righteousness which is in the law," Phil. iii. 6. This is a plain evidence that "the eye is evil, the whole body being full of darkness," Matth. vi. 23. The unrenewed part of mankind is rambling through the world, like so many blind men, who will neither take a guide, nor can guide themselves; and therefore are falling over this and the other precipice, into destruction. Some are running after their covetousness, till they are pierced through with many sorrows; some sticking in the mire of sensuality; others dashing themselves on the rock of pride and self-conceit: every one stumbling on some one stone of stumbling or other: all of them are running themselves upon the sword-point of justice, while they eagerly follow whither unmortified passions and affections lead them: and while some are lying along in the way, others are coming up, and falling headlong over them. Therefore, "woe unto thee" blind "world because of offences," Matth. xviii. 7. Errors in judgment swarm in the world because it is "night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." All the unregenerate are utterly mistaken in the point of true happiness: for though Christianity hath fixed that matter in point of principle, yet nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in the practical judgment. All men agree in the desire of being happy; but, among the unrenewed men, concerning the way to happiness, there are almost as many opinions as there are men; they being

“turned every one to his own way,” Isa. liii. 6. They are like the blind men of Sodom, about Lot’s house, all were seeking to find the door; some grope one part of the wall for it, some another, but none of them could certainly say, he had found it; so the natural man may stumble on any good, but the chief good. Look into thine own unregenerate heart, and there thou wilt see all turned upside down: heaven lying under, and earth at top. Look into thy life, there thou mayst see how thou art playing the madman, snatching at shadows, and neglecting the substance: eagerly flying after that which is not, and slighting that which is, and will be for ever.

Proof 3. The natural man is always a workman left without light; either trifling or doing mischief. Try to catch thy heart at any time thou wilt, and thou wilt find it either weaving the spider’s web, or hatching cockatrice eggs, Isa. lix. 5, roving through the world, or digging into the pit; filled with vanity, or else with villainess; busy doing nothing, or what is worse than nothing. A sad sign of a dark mind.

Proof 4. The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things. He knows not what a God he has to do with: he is unacquainted with Christ, and knows not what sin is. The greatest graceless wits are blind as moles in these things. Ay, but some such can speak of them to good purpose; so might those Israelites of the temptations, signs, and miracles, which their eyes had seen, Deut. xxix. 3; to whom nevertheless, the Lord had “not given a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto that day,” ver. 4. Many a man that bears the name of a Christian, may make Pharaoh’s confession of faith, Exod. v. 2, “I know not the Lord,” neither will he let go what he commands them to part with. God is with them, as a prince in disguise among his subjects, who meets with no better treatment from them than if they were his fellows, Psalm l. 21. Do they know Christ, or see his glory, and any beauty in him, for which he is to be desired? If they did, they would not slight him as they do: a view of his glory would so darken all created excellence, that they would take him for and instead of all, and gladly close with him, as he offers himself in the gospel, John iv. 13; Psalm ix. 10; Matt. xiii. 44—46. Do they know what sin is, who nurse the serpent in their bosom, hold fast deceit, and refuse to let it go? I own, indeed, that they may have a natural knowledge of these things, as the unbelieving Jews had of Christ, whom they saw and conversed with; but there was a spiritual glory in him, perceived by believers only, John i. 14, and in respect of that glory, “the” unbelieving “world knew him not,” ver. 10. The spiritual knowledge of them they cannot have it is above the reach of

the carnal mind. 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." He may indeed discourse of them, but in no other way than one can talk of honey or vinegar, who never tasted the sweetness of the one, nor the sourness of the other. He has some notions of spiritual truths, but sees not the things themselves that are wrapt up in the words of truth, 1 Tim. i. 7. "Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." In a word, natural men fear, seek, confess, they know not what. Thus you may see man's understanding naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things.

3. There is in the mind of man a natural bias to evil, whereby it comes to pass, that whatever difficulties it finds while occupied about things truly good, it acts with a great deal of ease in evil, as being in that case in its own element, Jer. iv. 22. The carnal mind drives heavily on in the thoughts of good, but furiously in the thoughts of evil. While holiness is before it, fetters are upon it; but when once it has got over the hedge, it is as a bird got out of a cage, and becomes a freethinker indeed. Let us reflect a little on the apprehension and imagination of the carnal mind, and we shall find incontestable evidence of this woful bias to evil.

Proof 1. As when a man by a violent stroke on the head loses his sight, there arises to him a kind of false light whereby he seems to see a thousand airy nothings; so man, being struck blind to all that is truly good for his eternal interest, has a light of another sort brought into his mind; his eyes are opened, knowing evil; and so are the words of the tempter verified, Gen. iii. 5. The words of the prophet are plain—"They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. iv. 22. The mind of man has a natural dexterity to devise mischief; there are not any so simple as to want skill to contrive ways to gratify their lusts, and ruin their souls, though the power of every one's hand cannot reach to put their devices in execution. No one needs to be taught this black art; but, as weeds grow up of their own accord in the neglected ground, so does this wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish, Jam. iii. 15, grow up in the minds of men, by virtue of the corruption of their nature. Why should we be surprised with the product of corrupt wits, their cunning devices to affront Heaven, to oppose and run down truth and holiness, and to gratify their own and other men's lusts? They row with the stream, no wonder that they make great progress; their stock is within them, and increases by using it, and the works of darkness are contrived with the greater advantage, because the mind is wholly destitute of spiritual light, which, if it

were in them in any measure, would so far mar the work: 1 John iii. 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;" he does it not as by art, wilfully and habitually, for "his seed remaineth in him." But, on the other hand, "It is as a sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom," Prov. x. 23. "To do witty mischief nicely," as the words import, "is as a sport or play to a fool;" it comes off with him easily; and why, but because he is a fool, and hath not wisdom, which would mar the contrivances of darkness! The more natural a thing is, the more easily it is done.

Proof 2. Let the corrupt mind have but the advantage of one's being employed in, or present at, some piece of service for God, that so the device, if not in itself sinful, yet may become sinful by its unseasonableness: it will quickly fall upon some device or expedient, by its starting aside, which deliberation, in season, could not produce. Thus Saul, who wist not what to do before the priest began to consult God, is quickly determined when once the priest's hand was in: his own heart then gave him an answer, and would not allow him to wait an answer from the Lord, 1 Sam. xiv. 18, 19. Such a devilish dexterity hath the carnal mind in devising what may most effectually divert men from their duty to God.

Proof 3. Doth not the carnal mind naturally strive to grasp spiritual things in imagination, as if the soul were quite immersed in flesh and blood, and would turn every thing into its own shape? Let men who are used to the forming of the most abstracted notions, look into their own souls, and they will find this bias in their minds; whereof the idolotry which did of old, and still doth, so much prevail in the world, is an incontestible evidence: for it plainly shews, that men naturally would have a visible deity, and see what they worship, and therefore they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image," &c. Rom. i. 23. The reformation of these nations, blessed be the Lord for it, has banished idolatry, and images too, out of our churches; but heart-reformation only can break down mental idolatry, and banish the more subtle and refined image worship, and representations of the Deity, out of the minds of men. The world, in the time of its darkness, was never more prone to the former, than the unsanctified mind is to the latter. Hence are horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God, Christ, the glory above, and all spiritual things.

Proof 4. What a difficult task is it to detain the carnal mind before the Lord! how averse is it to entertain good thoughts, and dwell in the meditation of spiritual things! If a person be driven, at any time, to think of the great concerns of his soul, it is not

harder work to hold in an unruly hungry beast, than to hedge in the carnal mind, that it get not away to the vanities of the world again. When God is speaking to men by his word, or they are speaking to him in prayer, does not the mind often leave them before the Lord, like so many "idols that have eyes, but see not, and ears, but hear not." The carcass is laid down before God, but the world gets away the heart; though the eyes be closed, the man sees a thousand vanities; the mind, in the mean time, is like a bird got loose out of a cage, skipping from bush to bush; so that, in effect, the man never comes to himself till he is gone from the presence of the Lord. Say not, it is impossible to get the mind fixed—it is hard, indeed, but not impossible: grace from the Lord can do it, Psalm cviii. 1; agreeable objects will do it. A pleasant speculation will arrest the minds of the inquisitive; the worldly man's mind is in little hazard of wandering, when he is contriving his business, casting up his accounts, or telling his money; if he answers you not at first, he tells you he did not hear you, he was busy; his mind was fixed. Were we admitted into the presence of a king, to petition for our lives, we should be in no hazard of gazing through the chamber of presence. But this is the case, the carnal mind, employed about any spiritual good, is out of its element, and therefore cannot fix.

Proof 5. But however hard it is to keep the mind on good thoughts, it sticks like glue to what is evil and corrupt like itself, 2 Pet. ii. 14, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." Their eyes cannot cease from sin, (so the words are constructed,) that is, their hearts and minds, venting by the eyes what is within, are like a furious beast, which cannot be held in when once it has got out its head. Let the corrupt imagination once be let loose on its favourite object, it will be found hard work to call it back again, though both reason and will are for its retreat. For then it is in its own element; and to draw it off from its impurities, is like drawing a fish out of the water, or rending a limb from a man. It runs like fire set to a train of powder, that rests not till it can get no farther.

Proof 6. Consider how the carnal imagination supplies the want of real objects to the corrupt heart, that it may make sinners happy, at least in the imaginary enjoyment of their lusts. Thus the corrupt heart feeds itself with imagination-sins; the unclean person is filled with speculative impurities, "having eyes full of adultery;" the covetous man fills his heart with the world, though he cannot get his hands full of it; the malicious person with delight acts his revenge within his own breast: the envious man, within his own

narrow soul, beholds with satisfaction his neighbour laid low; and every lust finds the corrupt imagination a friend to it in time of need. This the heart does, not only when people are awake, but sometimes even when they are asleep; whereby it comes to pass, that those sins are acted in dreams, which their hearts pant after when they are awake. I am aware that some question the sinfulness of these things; but can it be thought they are consistent with that holy nature and frame of spirit which was in innocent Adam, and in Jesus Christ, and should be in every one? It is the corruption of nature, then, that makes filthy dreamers condemned, Jude, ver. 8. Solomon had experience of the exercise of grace in sleep: in a dream he prayed, in a dream he made the best choice; both were accepted of God, 1 Kings iii. 5—15. And if a man may, in his sleep, do what is good and acceptable to God, why may he not also, when asleep, do that which is evil and displeasing to God? The same Solomon would have men aware of this, and prescribes the best remedy against it, namely, “the law upon the heart,” Prov. vi. 20, 21. “When thou sleepest,” says he, ver. 22, “it shall keep thee,” to wit, from sinning in thy sleep; that is, from sinful dreams: for a man’s being kept from sin, not his being kept from affliction, is the immediate proper effect of the law of God impressed upon the heart, Psalm cxix. 11. And thus the whole verse is to be understood, as appears from ver. 23. “For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” Now, the law is a lamp and light, as it guides in the way of duty; and instructing reproofs from the law are the way of life, as they keep from sin: they guide not into the way of peace, but as they lead into the way of duty; nor do they keep a man out of trouble, but as they keep him from sin. Remarkable is the particular which Solomon instances, namely, the sin of uncleanness, “to keep thee from the evil woman,” &c. ver. 24, which is to be joined to ver. 22, enclosing the 23d in a parenthesis, as some versions have it. These things may suffice to convince us of the natural bias of the mind to evil.

4. There is in the carnal mind an opposition to spiritual truths, and an aversion to receive them. It is as little a friend to divine truths, as it is to holiness. The truths of natural religion, which do, as it were, force their entry into the minds of natural men, they hold prisoners in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18. As for the truths of revealed religion, there is an evil heart of unbelief in them, which opposes their entry; and there is an armed force necessary to captivate the mind to the belief of them, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. God has made a revelation of his mind and will to sinners, concerning the way of

salvation; he has given us the doctrine of his holy word: but do natural men believe it indeed? No, they do not; "for he that believeth not on the Son of God, believeth not God," as is plain from 1 John v. 10. They believe not the promises of the word: they look on them, in effect, only as fair words; for those who receive them are thereby made "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. The promises are as silver cords let down from heaven, to draw sinners unto God, and to waft them over into the promised land; but they cast them from them. They believe not the threatenings of the word. As men travelling in deserts carry fire about with them, to frighten away wild beasts, so God has made his law a fiery law, Deut. xxxiii. 2, surrounding it with threats of wrath: but men are naturally more brutish than beasts themselves; and will needs touch the fiery smoking mountain, though they should be thrust through with a dart. I doubt not but most, if not all of you, who are yet in the black state of nature, will here plead, Not Guilty; but remember, the carnal Jews in Christ's time were as confident as you are, that they believed Moses, John ix. 28, 29. But he confutes their confidence, roundly telling them, John v. 46, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me." If you believe the truths of God, you dared not to reject, as you do, Him who is truth itself. The very difficulty you find in assenting to this truth, discovers that unbelief which I am charging you with. Has it not proceeded so far with some at this day, that it has steeled their foreheads with impudence and impiety, openly to reject all revealed religion? Surely it is "out of the abundance of the heart their mouth speaketh." But, though ye set not your mouth against the heavens, as they do, the same bitter root of unbelief is in all men by nature, and reigns in you, and will reign, till overcoming grace brings your minds to the belief of the truth. To convince you in this point, consider these three things:

Proof 1. How few are there who have been blessed with an inward illumination, by the special operation of the Spirit of Christ, leading them into a view of divine truths in their spiritual and heavenly lustre! How have you learned the truths of religion, which you pretend to believe? You have them merely by the benefit of external revelation, and by education; so that you are Christians, just because you were not born and bred in a Pagan, but in a Christian country. You are strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in your hearts; and so you cannot have the assurance of faith, with respect to the outward divine revelation made in the word, 1 Cor. ii. 10—12, therefore you are still unbelievers. "It is written in the Prophets, They shall be

all taught of God.—Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me,” says our Lord, John vi. 45. Now, ye have not come to Christ, therefore ye have not been taught of God: ye have not been so taught, and therefore ye have not come; ye believe not. Behold the revelation from which the faith, even of the fundamental principles in religion, springs, Matt. xvi. 16, 17, “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.—Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” If ever the Spirit of the Lord take you in hand, to work in you that faith which is of the operation of God, it may be, that as much time will be spent in rasing the old foundation, as will make you find the necessity of the working of his mighty power, to enable you to believe the very foundation-principles, which now you think you make no doubt of, Eph. i. 19.

Proof 2. How many professors have made shipwreck of their faith, such as it was, in time of temptation and trial! See how they fall, like stars from heaven, when Antichrist prevails! 2 Thess. ii. 12, “God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth.” They fall into damning delusions; because they never really believed the truth, though they themselves, and others too, thought they did believe it. That house is built on the sand, and that faith is but ill-founded, that cannot stand, but is quite overthrown, when the storm comes.

Proof 3. Consider the utter inconsistency of most men’s lives with the principles of religion which they profess: you may as soon bring east and west together, as their principles and practice. Men believe that fire will burn them; and therefore they will not throw themselves into it: but the truth is, most men live as if they thought the gospel a mere fable, and the wrath of God, revealed in his word against their unrighteousness and ungodliness, a mere scarecrow. If you believe the doctrines of the word, how is it that you are so unconcerned about the state of your souls before the Lord? how is it that you are so little concerned about this weighty point, whether you be born again or not? Many live as they were born, and are likely to die as they live, and yet live in peace. Do such persons believe the sinfulness and misery of a natural state? Do they believe that they are children of wrath? Do they believe that there is no salvation without regeneration, and no regeneration but what makes a man a new creature? If you believe the promises of the word, why do you not embrace them, and seek to enter into the promised rest? What sluggard would not dig for a hid

treasure, if he really believed that he might so obtain it? Men will work and toil for a maintenance, because they believe that by so doing they shall get it; yet they will be at no tolerable pains for the eternal weight of glory! why, but because they do not believe the word of promise? Heb. iv. 1, 2. If you believe the threatenings, how is it that you live in your sins; live out of Christ, and yet hope for mercy? Do such persons believe God to be the holy and just One, who will by no means clear the guilty? No, no; none believe; none, or next to none, believe what a just God the LORD is, and how severely he punisheth.

5. There is in the mind of man a natural proneness to lies and falsehood, which favours his lusts: "They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies," Psalm lviii. 3. We have this, with the rest of the corruption of our nature, from our first parents. God revealed the truth to them: but through the solicitation of the tempter, they first doubted, then disbelieved it, and embraced a lie instead of it. For an incontestable evidence hereof, we may see the first article of the devil's creed, "ye shall not surely die," Gen. iii. 4, which was obtruded by him on our first parents, and by them received, naturally embraced by their posterity, and held fast, till light from heaven obliges them to quit it. It spreads itself through the lives of natural men: who, till their consciences are awakened, walk after their own lusts, still retaining the principle, "That they shall not surely die." And this is often improved to such perfection, that man says, in the face of the denounced curse, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst," Deut. xxix. 19. Whatever advantage the truths of God have over error, by means of education or otherwise, error has always, with the natural man, this advantage against truth, namely, that there is something within him which says, "O that it were true!" so that the mind lies fair for assenting to it. And this is the reason of it: the true doctrine is, "the doctrine that is according to godliness," 1 Tim. vi. 3, and "the truth which is after godliness," Titus i. 1. Error is the doctrine which is according to ungodliness; for there is not an error in the mind, nor an untruth vented in the world, in matters of religion, but has an affinity with one corruption of the heart or another; according to that saying of the apostle, 2 Thess. ii. 12, "They believed not the truth," but had pleasure in unrighteousness. So that truth and error, being otherwise attended with equal advantages for their reception, error, by this means, has most ready access into the minds of men in their natural state. Wherefore, it is not strange that men reject the simplicity of gospel truths and institutions, and

greedily embrace error and external pomp in religion, seeing they are so agreeable to the lusts of the heart, and the vanity of the mind of the natural man. Hence also it is, that so many embrace atheistical principles; for none do it but in compliance with their irregular passions; none but those, whose advantage it would be that there were no God.

6. Man is naturally high-minded; for when the gospel comes in power to him, it is employed in "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," 2 Cor. x. 5. Lowliness of mind is not a flower that grows in the field of nature; but is planted by the finger of God in a renewed heart, and learned of the lowly Jesus. It is natural to man to think highly of himself, and what is his own: for the stroke which he has got by his fall in Adam, has produced a false light, whereby mole-hills about him appear like mountains; and a thousand airy beauties present themselves to his deluded fancy. "Vain man would be wise," so he accounts himself, and so he would be accounted by others, "though man be born like a wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12. His way is right, because it is his own: for "every way of man is right in his own eyes," Prov. xxi. 2. His state is good, because he knows none better; he is alive without the law, Rom. vii. 9, and therefore his hope is strong, and his confidence firm. It is another tower of Babel, reared up against heaven; and it will not fall, while the power of darkness can hold it up. The word batters it, yet it stands; one while breaches are made in it, but they are quickly repaired; at another time, it is all made to shake, but still it is kept up; till either God himself by his Spirit raises a heart-quake within the man, which tumbles it down, and leaves not one stone upon another, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, or death batters it down, and razes the foundation of it, Luke xvi. 23. And as the natural man thinks highly of himself, so he thinks meanly of God, whatever he pretends, Psalm l. 21, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." The doctrine of the gospel, and the mystery of Christ, are foolishness to him; and in his practice he treats them as such, 1 Cor. i. 18, and ii. 14. He brings the word and the works of God, in the government of the world, before the bar of his carnal reason; and there they are presumptuously censured and condemned, Hos. xiv. 9. Sometimes the ordinary restraints of Providence are taken off, and Satan is permitted to stir up the carnal mind: and, in that case, it is like an ant's nest, uncovered and disturbed; doubts, denials, and hellish reasonings, crowd in it, and cannot be overcome by all the arguments brought against them, till power from on high subdue the mind, and still the mutiny of the corrupt principles.

Thus much of the corruption of the understanding ; which, although the half be not told, may discover to you the absolute necessity of regenerating grace. Call the understanding now, "Ichabod ; for the glory is departed from it," 1 Samuel iv. 21. Consider this, you that are in the state of nature, and groan out your case before the Lord, that the Sun of Righteousness may arise upon you, lest you be shut up in everlasting darkness. What avails your worldly wisdom ? What do your attainments in religion avail, while your understanding lies wrapt up in its natural darkness and confusion, utterly void of the light of life ? Whatever be the natural man's gifts or attainments, we must, as in the case of the leper, Lev. xiii. 44, "pronounce him utterly unclean, his plague is in his head." But that is not all ; it is in his heart too ; his will is corrupted, as I shall soon shew.

II. *Of the Corruption of the Will.*

The Will; that commanding faculty, which at first was faithful and ruled with God, is now turned traitor, and rules with and for the devil. God planted it in man, "wholly a right seed;" but now it is "turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine." It was originally placed in due subordination to the will of God, as was shewn before ; but now it is wholly gone aside. However some magnify the power of free-will, a view of the spirituality of the law, to which acts of moral discipline in no wise answer, and a deep insight into the corruption of nature, given by the inward operation of the Spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, would make men find an absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness from off their free-will. To open up this plague of the heart, I offer these following things to be considered :

1. There is, in the unrenewed will, an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man's will is in Satan's fetters, hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave, Eph. ii. 1. We deny him not a power to choose, pursue, and act what is good, as to the matter ; but though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing aright and well, John xv. 5. Christ says, "Without me," that is, separate from me, as a branch from the stock, as both the word and context will bear, "ye can do nothing;" which means, nothing truly and spiritually good. His very choice and desire of spiritual things, is carnal and selfish, John vi. 26. "Ye seek me—because ye did eat of

the loaves and were filled." He not only does not come to Christ, but "he cannot come," ver. 44. And what can he do acceptable to God, who believeth not on him whom the Father hath sent? To prove this inability for good in the unregenerate, consider these two things :

Proof. 1. How often does the light so shine before men's eyes, that they cannot but see the good which they should choose, and the evil which they should refuse : and yet their hearts have no more power to comply with that light, than as if they were arrested by some invisible hand ! They see what is right, yet they follow, and cannot but follow what is wrong. Their consciences tell them the right way, and approve of it too, yet their will cannot be brought up to it : their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it ; so that they sigh and go backward, notwithstanding their light. If it be not thus, how is it that the word and way of holiness meet with such entertainment in the world ? How is it that clear arguments and reason on the side of piety and a holy life, which seem to have weight even with the carnal mind, do not bring men over to that side ? Although the existence of a heaven and a hell were only probable, it were sufficient to determine the will to the choice of holiness, were it capable of being determined thereto by mere reason : but men, "knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them," Rom. i. 31. And how is it that those who magnify the power of free-will, do not confirm their opinion before the world, by an ocular demonstration in a practice as far above others in holiness, as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others ? Or is it maintained only for the protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please ; and when they have no more use for them, throw them off in a moment, and leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom ? Whatever use some make of that principle, it does of itself, and in its own nature, cast a broad shadow for a shelter to wickedness of heart and life. It may be observed, that the generality of the hearers of the gospel, of all denominations, are plagued with it ; for it is a root of bitterness, natural to all men ; from whence spring so much fearlessness about the soul's eternal state, so many delays and excuses in that weighty matter, whereby much work is laid up for a deathbed by some, while others are ruined by a legal walk, and neglect the life of faith, and the making use of Christ for sanctification ; all flowing from the persuasion of sufficient natural abilities. So agreeable is it to corrupt nature.

Proof 2. Let those, who, by the power of the spirit of bondage,

have had the law opened before them in its spirituality, for their conviction, speak and tell, if they found themselves able to incline their hearts toward it, in that case; nay, whether the more that light shone into their souls, they did not find their hearts more and more unable to comply with it. There are some who have been brought unto "the place of the breaking forth," who are yet in the devil's camp, who from their experience can tell, that light let into the mind cannot give life to the will, to enable it to comply therewith; and could give their testimony here, if they would. But take Paul's testimony concerning it, who, in his unconverted state, was far from believing his utter inability for good; but learned it by experience, Rom. vii. 8—13. I own, the natural man may have a kind of love to the letter of the law: but here lies the stress of the matter, he looks on the holy law in a carnal dress; and so, while he embraces the creature of his own fancy, he thinks that he has the law; but in very deed he is without the law: for as yet he sees it not in its spirituality; if he did, he would find it the very reverse of his own nature, and what his will could not fall in with, till changed by the power of grace.

2. There is in the unrenewed will an aversion to good. Sin is the natural man's element; he is as unwilling to part with it as fish are to come out of the water on to dry land. He not only cannot come to Christ, but he *will not come*, John v. 40. He is polluted, and hates to be washed, Jer. xiii. 27, "Wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?" He is sick, yet utterly averse to the remedy: he loves his disease so, that he loathes the Physician. He is a captive, a prisoner, and a slave; but he loves his conqueror, his jailor, and master: he is fond of his fetters, prison, and drudgery, and has no liking to his liberty. For proof of the aversion to good in the will of man, I will instance in some particulars:

Proof 1. The untowardness of children. Do we not see them naturally lovers of sinful liberty? How unwilling are they to be hedged in! How averse to restraint! The world can bear witness, that they are "as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke:" and more, that it is far easier to bring young bullocks tamely to bear the yoke, than to bring young children under discipline, and make them tamely submit to be restrained in sinful liberty. Every body may see in this, as in a glass, that man is naturally wild and wilful, according to Zophar's observation, Job xi. 12, that "man is born like a wild ass's colt." What can be said more? He is like a colt, the colt of an ass, the colt of a wild ass. Compare Jer. ii. 24, "A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away?"

Proof 2. What pain and difficulty do men often find in bringing their hearts to religious duties ! and what a task is it to the carnal heart to abide at them ! It is a pain to it, to leave the world but a little to come before God. It is not easy to borrow time from the many things, to spend it upon the one thing needful. Men often go to God in duties, with their faces towards the world ; and when their bodies are on the mount of ordinances, their hearts will be found at the foot of the hill "going after their covetousness," Ezek. xxxiii. 31. They are soon wearied of well-doing ; for holy duties are not agreeable to their corrupt nature. Take notice of them at their worldly business, set them down with their carnal company, or let them be enjoying a lust ; time seems to them to fly, and drive furiously, so that it is gone before they are aware. But how heavily does it pass, while a prayer, a sermon, or a Sabbath lasts ! The Lord's day is the longest day of all the week, with many ; therefore they must sleep longer that morning, and go sooner to bed that night, than ordinarily they do ; that the day may be made of a tolerable length : for their hearts say within them, "When will the Sabbath be gone ?" Amos viii. 5. The hours of worship are the longest hours of that day : hence, when duty is over, they are like men eased of a burden ; and when sermon is ended, many have neither the grace nor the good manners to stay till the blessing is pronounced, but, like the beasts, their head is away, so soon as a man puts his hand to loose them ; and why ? because, while they are at ordinances, they are, as Doeg, "detained before the Lord," 1 Sam. xxii. 7.

Proof 3. Consider how the will of the natural man rebels against the light, Job xxiv. 13. Light sometimes enters in, because he is not able to keep it out : but he loves darkness rather than light. Sometimes, by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up ; but the inner door of the will remains fast bolted. Then lusts rise against light : corruption and conscience encounter, and fight as in the field of battle, till corruption getting the upper hand, conscience is forced to turn its back ; convictions are murdered, and truth is made and held prisoner, so that it can create no more disturbance. While the word is preached or read, or the rod of God is upon the natural man, sometimes convictions are darted in upon him, and his spirit is wounded in greater or lesser measure : but these convictions not being able to make him fall, he runs away with the arrows sticking in his conscience ; and at length, one way or other, gets them out, and makes himself whole again. Thus, while the light shines, men, naturally averse to it, wilfully shut their eyes, till God is provoked to blind them judicially, and they

become proof against his word and providences too : so, go where they will, they can sit at ease ; there is never a word from heaven to them, that goeth deeper than their ears. Hos. iv. 17, " Ephraim is joined to idols : let him alone."

Proof 4. Let us observe the resistance made by elect souls, when the Spirit of the Lord is at work, to bring them from " the power of Satan unto God." Zion's King gets no subjects but by stroke of sword, " in the day of his power," Psalm cx. 2, 3. None come to him, but such as are drawn by a divine hand, John iv. 44. When the Lord comes to the soul, he finds the strong man keeping the house, and a deep peace and security there, while the soul is fast asleep in the devil's arms. But " the prey must be taken from the mighty, and the captive delivered." Therefore the Lord awakens the sinner, opens his eyes, and strikes him with terror, while the clouds are black above his head, and the sword of vengeance is held to his breast. Now, he is at no small pains to put a fair face on a black heart, to shake off his fears, to make head against them, and to divert himself from thinking on the unpleasant and ungrateful subject of his soul's case. If he cannot so rid himself from them, carnal reason is called in to help, and urges, that there is no ground for such great fear ; all may be well enough yet ; and if it be ill with him, it will be ill with many. When the sinner is beat from this, and sees no advantage in going to hell with company, he resolves to leave his sins, but cannot think of breaking off so soon ; there is time enough, and he will do it afterwards. Conscience says, " To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts : " but he cries, " To-morrow, Lord ; to-morrow, Lord ; " and " just now, Lord ; " till that now is never like to come. Thus many times he comes from his prayers and confessions, with nothing but a breast full of sharper convictions ; for the heart does not always cast up the sweet morsel, as soon as confession is made with the mouth, Judges x. 10—16. And when conscience obliges him to part with some lusts, others are kept as right eyes and right hands, and there are rueful looks after those that are put away ; as it was with the Israelites, who with bitter hearts remembered " the fish they did eat in Egypt freely," Numb. xi. 5. Nay, when he is so pressed, that he must needs say before the Lord, that he is content to part with all his idols ; the heart will be giving the tongue the lie. In a word, the soul, in this case, will shift from one thing to another ; like a fish with the hook in its jaws, till it can do no more, for power is come to make it yield, as " the wild ass in her month," Jer. ii. 24.

3. There is in the will of man a natural " proneness to evil," a

woful bent towards sin. Men naturally are "bent to backsliding from God," Hos. xi. 7. They hang, as the word is, towards backsliding; even as a hanging wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. Set holiness and life upon the one side, sin and death upon the other; and leave the unrenewed will to itself, it will choose sin, and reject holiness. This is no more to be doubted, than that water, poured on the side of a hill will run downward, and not upward; or that a flame will ascend, and not descend.

Proof 1. Is not the way of evil the first way which the children of men go? Do not their inclinations plainly appear on the wrong side, while yet they have no cunning to hide them? In the first opening of our eyes in the world, we look asquint, hell-ward, not heaven-ward. As soon as it appears that we are rational creatures, it appears that we are sinful creatures, Psalm lviii. 3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born." Prov. xxii. 15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Folly is bound in the heart, it is woven into our very nature. The knot will not unloose; it must be broken asunder by strokes. Words will not do it, the rod must be taken to drive it away; and if it be not driven far away, the heart and it will meet and knit again. Not that the rod of itself will do this: the sad experience of many parents testifies the contrary; and Solomon himself tells you, Prov. xxvii. 22, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar, among wheat, with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him;" it is so bound in his heart. But the rod is an ordinance of God, appointed for that end; which, like the word, is made effectual, by the Spirit's accompanying his own ordinance. This, by the way, shews that parents, in administering correction to their children, have need, first of all, to correct their own irregular passions, and look upon it as a matter of awful solemnity, setting about it with much dependance on the Lord, and following it with prayer for the blessing, if they would have it effectual.

Proof. 2. How easily are men led aside to sin! The children who are not persuaded to good, are otherwise simple ones, easily wrought upon: those whom the word cannot draw to holiness, are "led by Satan at his pleasure." Profane Esau, that cunning man, Gen. xxv. 27, was as easily cheated of the blessing as if he had been a fool or an idiot. The more natural a thing is, the more easy it is: so Christ's yoke is easy to the saints, in so far as they are partakers of the divine nature: and sin is easy to the unrenewed man; but to learn to do good, is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin; because the will naturally hangs towards evil, and is averse

to good. A child can cause a round thing to run, when he cannot move a square thing of the same weight; for the roundness makes it fit for motion, so that it goes with a touch. Even so, men find the heart easily carried towards sin, while it is as a dead weight in the way of holiness; we must seek for the reason of this from the natural set and disposition of the heart, whereby it is prone and bent to evil. Were man's will, naturally, but in equal balance to good and evil, the one might be embraced with as little difficulty as the other; but experience testifies it is not so. In the sacred history of the Israelites, especially in the Book of Judges, how often do we find them forsaking Jehovah, the mighty God, and doting upon the idols of the nations about them! But did ever any one of these nations grow fond of Israel's God, and forsake their own idols? No, no; though man is naturally given to changes, it is but from evil to evil, not from evil to good. Jer. ii. 10, 11, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit." Surely the will of man stands not in equal balance, but has a cast to the wrong side.

Proof 3. Consider how men go on still in the way of sin, till they are stopped, and that by another hand than their own; Isa. lvii. 17, "I hid me, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart." If God withdraw his restraining hand, and lay the reins on the sinner's neck, he is under no doubt what way to choose; for, observe it, the way of sin is the way of his heart; his heart naturally lies that way; it hath a natural propensity to sin. As long as God suffers them, they walk in their own way, Acts xiv. 16. The natural man is so fixed in his woful choice, that there needs no more to shew he is off from God's way, than to say he is upon his own.

Proof 4. Whatsoever good impressions are made on him, they do not last. Though his heart be firm as a stone, yea, harder than the nether-millstone, in point of receiving of them; it is otherwise unstable as water, and cannot keep them. It works against the receiving of them; and, when they are made, it works them off, and returns to its natural bias; Hos. vi. 4, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." The morning cloud promises a heavy shower, but, when the sun arises, it vanisheth: the sun beats upon the early dew, and it evaporates; so the husbandman's expectation is disappointed. Such is the goodness of the natural man. Some sharp affliction, or piercing conviction, obliges him, in some sort, to turn from his evil course: but his will not being renewed, religion is still against the grain with

him, and therefore this goes off again, Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. Though a stone thrown up into the air, may abide there a little while, yet its natural heaviness will bring it down again: so do unrenewed men return to their wallowing in the mire; because, though they washed themselves, yet their swinish nature was not changed. It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire, hard to make it keep alight; but it is harder than either of these to make the unrenewed will retain attained goodness; which is a plain evidence of the natural bent of the will to evil.

Proof 5. Do the saints serve the Lord now, as they were wont to serve sin, in their unconverted state? Very far from it, Rom. vi. 20, “When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” Sin got all, and admitted no partner; but now, when they are the servants of Christ, are they free from sin? Nay, there are still with them some deeds of the old man, shewing that he is but dying in them; and hence their hearts often misgive them, and slip aside unto evil, “when they would do good,” Rom. vii. 21. They need to watch, and keep their hearts with all diligence; and their sad experience teaches them, “That he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool,” Prov. xxviii. 26. If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in the dry?

4. There is a natural contrariety, direct opposition, and enmity, in the will of man, to God himself, and his holy will, Rom. viii. 7, “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The will was once God’s deputy in the soul, set to command there for him; but now it is set up against him. If you would have the picture of it in its natural state, the very reverse of the will of God represents it. If the fruit hanging before one’s eye be but forbidden, that is sufficient to draw the heart after it. Let me instance in the sin of profane swearing and cursing, to which some are so abandoned, that they take a pride in it, belching out horrid oaths and curses, as if hell opened with the opening of their mouths; or larding their speeches with minced oaths; and all this without any manner of provocation, though even that would not excuse them. Pray, tell me—1. What profit is there here? A thief gets something for his pains; a drunkard gets a belly-full; but what do you get? Others serve the devil for pay; but you are volunteers, who expect no reward but your work itself, in affronting Heaven; and if you repent not, you will get your reward in full measure; when you go to hell, your work will follow you. The drunkard shall not have a drop of water to cool his tongue there; nor will the covetous man’s wealth follow him into the other world! you may drive on your old trade there;

eternity will be long enough to give you your heart's fill of it. 2. What pleasure is there here, but what flows from your trampling on the holy law? Which of your senses doth swearing and cursing gratify? If it gratify your ears, it can only be by the noise it makes against the heavens. Though you had a mind to give up yourselves to all manner of profanity and sensuality, there is so little pleasure can be strained out of these sins, that we must needs conclude, your love to them, in this case, is a love to them for themselves, a devilish unhired love, without any prospect of profit or pleasure from them otherwise. If any shall say, these are monsters of men: be it so; yet, alas! the world is full of such monsters; they are to be found almost every where. Allow me to say, they must be admitted as the mouth of the whole unregenerate world against heaven, Rom. iii. 14, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Ver. 19, "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

I have a charge against every unregenerate man and woman, young and old, to be proved by the testimony of Scripture, and their own consciences; namely that whether they be professors or profane seeing they are not born again, they are heart enemies to God; to the Son of God; to the Spirit of God; and to the law of God. Hear this, ye careless souls, that live at ease in your natural state.

(1.) Ye are enemies to God in your mind, Col. i. 21. Ye are not as yet reconciled to him; the natural enmity is not as yet slain, though perhaps it lies hid, and ye do not perceive it. 1. You are enemies to the very being of God, Psalm xiv. 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." The proud man wishes that none were above himself; the rebel, that there were no king; and the un-renewed man, who is a mass of pride and rebellion, that there were no God. He saith it in his heart, he wisheth it were so, though he is ashamed and afraid to speak it out. That all natural men are such fools, appears from the apostle's quoting a part of this psalm, "That every mouth may be stopped," Rom. iii. 10—19. I own, indeed, that while the natural man looks on God as the Creator and Preserver of the world, because he loves his own self, therefore his heart rises not against the being of his Benefactor: but his enmity will quickly appear when he looks on God as the Governor and Judge of the world, binding him, under the pain of the curse, to exact holiness, and girding him with the cords of death, because of his sin. Listen in this case to the voice of the heart, and thou wilt find it to be, "No God." 2. Ye are enemies to the nature of God, Job xxi. 14, "They say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not

the knowledge of thy ways." Men set up to themselves an idol of their own fancy, instead of God, and then fall down and worship it. They love him no other way than Jacob loved Leah, while he took her for Rachel. Every natural man is an enemy to God, as he is revealed in his word. The infinitely holy, just, powerful, and true being, is not the God whom he loves, but the God whom he loathes. In fact, men naturally are haters of God, Rom. i. 30; if they could, they certainly would make him otherwise than what he is. For, consider it is a certain truth, that whatsoever is in God, is God; therefore his attributes or perfections are not any thing really distinct from himself. If God's attributes be not God himself, he is a compound being, and so not the first being, to say which is blasphemous; for the parts compounding, are before the compound itself; but he is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

Now, upon this I would, for your conviction, propose to your conscience a few queries. 1. How stand your hearts affected towards the infinite purity and holiness of God? Conscience will give an answer to this, which the tongue will not speak out. If you be not partakers of his holiness you cannot be reconciled to it. The Pagans finding that they could not be like God in holiness, made their god's like themselves in filthiness; and thereby they shew what sort of a God the natural man would have. God is holy; can an unholy creature love his unspotted holiness? Nay, it is the righteous only that can "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," Psalm xvii. 12. God is light; can creatures of darkness rejoice therein? Nay, "every one that doth evil hateth the light," John iii. 20. "For what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Cor. vi. 14. 2. How stand your hearts affected to the justice of God? There is not a man, who is wedded to his lusts, as all the unregenerate are, but would be content, with the blood of his body, to blot that letter out of the name of God. Can the malefactor love his condemning judge? or an unjustified sinner, a just God? No, he cannot, Luke vii. 47, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Hence, as men cannot get the doctrine of his justice blotted out of the Bible, it is such an eye-sore to them, that they strive to blot it out of their minds: they ruin themselves by presuming on his mercy, while they are not careful to get a righteousness, wherein they may stand before his justice; but "say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil," Zeph. i. 12. 3. How stand you affected to the omniscience and omnipresence of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol, than the all-seeing God; therefore they do what they can, as Adam did, to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord. They no more love the

all-seeing, every-where present God, than the thief loves to have the judge witness to his evil deeds. If it could be carried by votes, God would be voted out of the world, and closed up in heaven; for the language of the carnal heart is, "The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth," Ezek. viii. 12. 4. How stand ye affected to the truth and veracity of God? There are but few in the world who can heartily subscribe to this sentence of the apostle, Rom. iii. 4, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Nay, truly, there are many who, in effect, hope that God will not be true to his word. There are thousands who hear the gospel, that hope to be saved, and think all safe with them for eternity, who never had any experience of the new birth, nor do at all concern themselves in the question, Whether they are born again, or not? a question that is likely to wear out from among us at this day. Our Lord's words are plain and peremptory, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What are such hopes, then, but real hopes that God—with profoundest reverence be it spoken—will recall his word, and that Christ will prove a false prophet? What else means the sinner, who, "when he heareth the words of the curse, blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart?" Deut. xxix. 19. 5. How stand you affected to the power of God? None but new creatures will love him for it, on a fair view thereof; though others may slavishly fear him upon account of it. There is not a natural man, but would contribute, to the utmost of his power, to the building of another tower of Babel, to hem it in. On these grounds I declare every unrenewed man an enemy to God.

(2.) You are enemies to the Son of God. That enmity to Christ is in your hearts, which would have made you join the husbandmen who killed the heir, and cast him out of the vineyard, if ye had been beset with their temptations, and no more restrained than they were. "Am I a dog?" you will say, that I should so treat my sweet Saviour? So did Hazeal ask in another case; but when he had the temptation, he was a dog to do it. Many call Christ their dear Saviour, whose consciences can bear witness, that they never derived as much sweetness from him as from their sweet lusts, which are ten times dearer to them than their Saviour. He is no other way dear to them, than as they abuse his death and sufferings, for the peaceable enjoyment of their lusts; that they may live as they please in the world; and when they die, be kept out of hell. Alas! it is but a mistaken Christ that is sweet to you, whose souls loathe that Christ who is the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." It is with you as it was with the

carnal Jews, who delighted in him, while they mistook his errand into the world, fancying that he would be a temporal deliverer to them, Mal. iii. 1. But when he "sat as a refiner and purifier of silver," vers. 2, 3, and rejected them as reprobate silver, who thought to have had no small honour in the kingdom of the Messiah, his doctrine galled their consciences, and they had no rest till they imbrued their hands in his blood. To open your eyes in this point, which you are so averse to believe, I will lay before you the enmity of your hearts against Christ in all his offices.

First, Every unregenerate man is an enemy to Christ in his prophetic office. He is appointed of the Father the great Prophet and Teacher; but not upon the call of the world, who, in their natural state, would have unanimously voted against him: therefore, when he came, he was condemned as a seducer and blasphemer. For evidence of this enmity, I will instance two things.

Proof 1. Consider the entertainment which he meets with when he comes to teach souls inwardly by his Spirit. Men do what they can to stop their ears, like the deaf adder, that they may not hear his voice. They "always resist the Holy Ghost:" "They desire not the knowledge of his ways;" and therefore bid him "depart from them." The old calumny is often raised upon him on that occasion, John x. 20, "He is mad, why hear ye him?" Soul-exercise, raised by the spirit of bondage, is accounted, by many, nothing else but distraction, and melancholy fits; men thus blaspheming the Lord's work, because they themselves are beside themselves, and cannot judge of those matters.

Proof 2. Consider the entertainment which he meets with when he comes to teach men outwardly by his word.

His written word, the Bible, is slighted. Christ hath left it to us, as the book of our instruction, to shew us what way we must steer our course, if we would go to Immanuel's land. It is a lamp to light us through a dark world, to eternal light. And he hath enjoined us, to search it with that diligence wherewith men dig into mines for silver and gold, John v. 39. But, ah! how is this sacred treasure profaned by many! They ridicule that holy word, by which they must be judged at the last day; and will rather lose their souls than their jest, dressing up the conceits of their wanton wits in scripture phrases; in which they act as mad a part, as one would dig into a mine, to procure metal to melt, and pour down his own and his neighbour's throat.—Many exhaust their spirits in reading romances, and their minds pursue them, as the flame doth the dry stubble; while they have no heart for, nor relish to, the holy word; and therefore seldom take a Bible in their hands. What is

agreeable to the vanity of their minds, is pleasant and taking; but what recommends holiness to their unholy hearts, makes their spirits dull and flat. What pleasure they find in reading a profane ballad, or story-book, to whom the Bible is entirely tasteless! Many lay by their Bibles with their sabbath-day's clothes; and whatever use they have for their clothes, they have none for their Bibles, till the return of the Sabbath. Alas! the dust or the finery about your Bibles is a witness now, and will, at the last day, be a witness of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a Prophet. Besides all this, among those who usually read the scripture, how few are there that read it as the word of the Lord to their souls, and keep up communion with him in it! They do not make his statues their c counsellors, nor does their particular case send them to their Bibles. They are strangers to the solid comforts of the scriptures. And when they are dejected, it is something else than the word that revives them: as Ahab was cured of his sullen fit, by the obtaining of Naboth's vineyard for him.

Christ's word preached is despised. The entertainment which most of the world, to whom it has come, have always given it, is that which is mentioned, Matt. xxii. 5, "They made light of it;" and for his sake, they are despised whom he employs to preach it; whatever other face men put upon their contempt of the ministry. John xv. 20, 21, "The servant is not greater than the Lord: if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake." That Levi was the son of *the hated*, seems not to have been without a mystery, which the world in all ages hath unriddled. But though the earthen vessels, wherein God has put the treasure, be turned, with many, into vessels wherein there is no pleasure, yet why is the treasure itself slighted? But slighted it is, and that with a witness, this day. "Lord, who hath believed our report? To whom shall we speak?" Men can, without remorse, make to themselves silent Sabbaths, one after another. And, alas! when they come to ordinances for the most part, it is but *to appear*, or as the word is, *to be seen* before the Lord; and to *tread his courts*, namely, as a company of beasts would do, if they were driven into them, Isa. i. 12, so little reverence and awe of God appear on their spirits. Many stand like brazen walls before the word, in whose corrupt conversation the preaching of the word makes no breach. Nay, not a few are growing worse and worse, under "precept upon precept;" and the result of all is, "They go and fall backward, and are broken, and snared, and taken," Isa. xxviii. 13. What tears of blood are sufficient to lament that the gospel of

“the grace of God,” is thus “received in vain?” Ministers are but the voice of one crying; the speaker is in heaven; and speaks to you from heaven by men: why do you “refuse him that speaketh?” Heb. xii. 25. God has made our master Christ, heir of all things, and we are sent to seek for a spouse for him. There is none so worthy as he; none more unworthy than they to whom this match is proposed; but the prince of darkness is preferred before the Prince of Peace. A dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam’s fall, more terrible than as if the sun, moon, and stars had been for ever wrapt up in blackness of darkness; and there we should have eternally lain, had not this grace of the gospel, as a shining sun, appeared to dispel it, Tit. ii. 11. But yet we fly like night-owls from it; and, like the wild beasts, lay ourselves down in our dens: when the sun ariseth, we are struck blind with the light thereof; and, as creatures of darkness, love darkness rather than light. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Christ, in his prophetic office.

Secondly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his priestly office. He is appointed of the Father a priest for ever; that, by his alone sacrifice and intercession, sinners may have peace with, and access to God, but Christ crucified is a stumbling-block, and foolishness to the unrenewed part of mankind, to whom he is preached, 1 Cor. i. 23. They are not for him as the “new and living way;” nor is he, by the voice of the world, “an High-priest over the house of God.” Corrupt nature goes quite another way to work.

Proof 1. None of Adam’s children are naturally inclined to receive the blessing in borrowed robes; but would always, according to the spider’s motto, “owe all to themselves;” and so climb up to heaven on a thread spun for themselves. For they “desire to be under the law,” Gal. iv. 21, and “go about to establish their own righteousness,” Rom. x. 3. Man naturally looks on God as a great master; and himself as his servant, that must work and win heaven as his wages. Hence, when conscience is awakened, he thinks that, to the end he may be saved, he must answer the demands of the law, serve God as well as he can, and pray for mercy wherein he comes short. And thus many come to duties, that never come out of them to Jesus Christ.

Proof 2. As men naturally think highly of their duties, that seem to them to be well done, so they look for acceptance with God, according as their work is done, not according to the share they have in the blood of Christ. “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?” They value themselves on their performances and attainments; yea, their very opinions in religion, Phil. iii. 4—

7, taking to themselves what they rob from Christ the great High-priest.

Proof 3. The natural man, going to God in duties, will always be found either to go without a Mediator, or with more than the one only Mediator, Jesus Christ. Nature is blind, and therefore venturesome; it sets men agoing immediately to God without Christ; to rush into his presence, and put their petitions in his hand, without being introduced by the Secretary of heaven, or putting their requests into his hand. So fixed is this disposition in the unrenewed heart, that when many hearers of the gospel are conversed with upon the point of their hopes of salvation, the name of Christ will scarcely be heard from their mouths. Ask them how they think to obtain the pardon of sin? they will tell you they beg and look for mercy, because God is a merciful God; and that is all they have to confide in. Others look for mercy for Christ's sake: but how do they know that Christ will take their plea in hand? Why, as the papists have their mediators with the Mediator, so have they. They know he cannot but do it; for they pray, confess, mourn, and have great desires, and the like; and so have something of their own to commend them unto him: they were never made poor in spirit, and brought empty-handed to Christ, to lay the stress of all on his atoning blood.

Thirdly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his kingly office. The Father hath appointed the Mediator, "King in Zion," Psalm ii. 6. All to whom the gospel comes are commanded, on their highest peril, "to kiss the Son," and submit themselves unto him, verse 12. But the natural voice of mankind is, "Away with him;" as you may see, verse 2, 3, "They will not have him to reign over them," Luke xix. 14.

Proof 1. The workings of corrupt nature would wrest the government out of his hands. No sooner was he born, but, being born a King, Herod persecuted him, Matt. ii. And when he was crucified, they "set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," Matt. xxvii. 37. Though his kingdom be a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world, yet they cannot allow him a kingdom within a kingdom, which acknowledgeth no other head or supreme but the Royal Mediator. They make bold with his royal prerogatives, changing his laws, institutions, and ordinances; modelling his worship according to the devices of their own hearts, introducing new offices and officers into his kingdom, not to be found in "the book of the manner of his kingdom;" disposing of the external government thereof, as may best suit their carnal designs. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Zion's King.

Proof 2. How unwilling are men, naturally, to submit unto, and be hedged in by, the laws and discipline of his kingdom! As a king, he is a lawgiver, Isaiah xxxiii. 22, and has appointed an external government, discipline, and censures, to control the unruly, and to keep his professed subjects in order, to be exercised by officers of his own appointment, Matt. xviii. 17, 18; 1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17; Heb. xiii. 17. But these are the great eye-sores of the carnal world, who love sinful liberty, and therefore cry out, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Psalm ii. 3. Hence this work is found to be, in a special manner, a striving against the stream of corrupt nature, which, for the most part, puts such a face on the church, as if there were no king in Israel, every one doing that which is right in his own eyes.

Proof 3. However natural men may be brought to feign submission to the King of saints, yet lusts always retain the throne and dominion in their hearts, and they are serving divers lusts and pleasures, Titus iii. 3. None, but those in whom Christ is formed, do really put the crown on his head, and receive the kingdom of Christ within them. His crown is "the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals." Who are they, whom the power of grace has not subdued, that will not allow him to set up, and to put down, in their souls, as he will? Nay, as for others, any lord shall sooner get the rule over them, than the Lord of glory: they kindly entertain his enemies, but will never absolutely resign themselves to his government, till conquered in a day of power. Thus you may see, that the natural man is an enemy to Jesus Christ in all his offices.

But O how hard it is to convince men in this point! They are very loath to believe. And, in a special manner, the enmity of the heart against Christ in his priestly office seems to be hid from the view of most of the hearers of the gospel. There appears to be a peculiar malignity in corrupt nature against this office of his. It may be observed, that the Socinians, those enemies of our blessed Lord, allow him to be properly a Prophet and a King, but deny him to be properly a Priest. And this is agreeable enough to the corruption of our nature: for, under the covenant of works, the Lord was known as a Prophet or Teacher, and also as a King or Ruler; but not at all as a Priest: so man knows nothing of the mystery of Christ, as the way to the Father, till it is revealed to him: and when it is revealed, the will riseth up against it; for corrupt nature is opposed to the mystery of Christ, and the great contrivance of salvation, through the crucified Saviour, revealed in the gospel. For clearing of which weighty truth, let these four things be considered:—

[1.] The soul's falling in with the grand scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, and setting the matters of salvation on that footing before the Lord, is declared by the Scriptures of truth to be an undoubted mark of a real saint, who is happy here, and shall be happy hereafter, Matt. xi. 6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Phil. iii. 3, "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Now, how could this be, if nature could comply with that grand device?

[2.] Corrupt nature is the very reverse of the gospel plan. In the gospel, God proposes Jesus Christ as the great means of re-uniting man to himself; he has named him as the Mediator, one in whom he is well pleased, and will have none but him, Matt. xvii. 5; but nature will have none of him, Psalm lxxi. 11. God appointed the place of meeting for the reconciliation, namely, the flesh of Christ; accordingly, God was in Christ, 2 Cor. v. 19, as the tabernacle of meeting, to make up the peace with sinners: but natural men, although they should die for ever, will not come to Christ, John v. 50, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." In the way of the gospel, the sinner must stand before the Lord in an imputed righteousness: but corrupt nature is for an inherent righteousness; and, therefore, so far as natural men follow after righteousness they follow after "the law of righteousness," Rom. ix. 31, 32; and not after "the Lord our righteousness." Nature is always for building up itself, and to have some ground for boasting; but the great design of the gospel is to exalt grace, to depress nature, and exclude boasting, Rom. iii. 27. The sum of our natural religion is, to do good from and for ourselves, John v. 44; the sum of the gospel religion is, to deny ourselves, and to do good from and for Christ, Phil. i. 21.

[3.] Every thing in nature is against believing in Jesus Christ. What beauty can the blind man discern in a crucified Saviour, for which he is to be desired? How can the will, naturally impotent, yea, and averse to good, make choice of him? Well may the soul then say to him in the day of the spiritual siege, as the Jebusite said to David in another case, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither," 2 Sam. v. 6. The way of nature is to go into oneself for all; according to the fundamental maxim of unsanctified morality, "That a man should trust in himself;" which, according to the doctrine of faith, is mere fool-

ishness : for so it is determined, Prov. xxviii. 26, " He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Now faith is the soul's going out of itself for all : and this nature, on the other hand, determines to be foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 18—23. Wherefore there is need of the working of mighty power to cause sinners to believe, Eph. i. 19 ; Isa. liii. 1. We see the promises of welcome to sinners, in the gospel-covenant, are ample, large, and free, clogged with no conditions, Isa. lv. 1 ; Rev. xxii. 17.—If they cannot believe his bare word, he has given his oath upon it, Ezek. xxxiii. 11 ; and, for their greater assurance, he has annexed seals to his sworn covenant, namely, the holy sacraments : so that no more could be demanded of the most faithless person in the world, to make us believe him, than the Lord hath condescended to give us, to make us believe himself. This plainly speaks nature to be against believing ; and those who flee to Christ for a refuge, to have need of strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18, to balance their strong doubts, and propensity to unbelief. Farther, also, it may be observed, how in the word sent to a secure, graceless generation, their objections are answered beforehand ; and words of grace are heaped one upon another, as you may read, Isa. lv. 7—9 ; Joel ii. 13. Why ? Because the Lord knows, that when these secure sinners are thoroughly awakened, doubts, fears, and carnal reasonings against believing, will be getting into their breasts, as thick as dust in a house, raised by sweeping a dry floor.

[4.] Corrupt nature is bent towards the way of the law, or covenant of works ; and every natural man, so far as he sets himself to seek after salvation, is engaged in that way ; and will not quit it, till beat from it by divine power. Now the way of salvation by works, and that of free grace in Jesus Christ, are inconsistent. Rom. xi. 6, " And if by grace, then is it no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace ; otherwise work is no more work." Gal. iii. 12, " And the law is not of faith ; but the man that doth them shall live in them." Wherefore, if the will of man naturally incline to the way of salvation by the law, it lies cross to the gospel plan. And that such is the natural bent of our hearts, will appear, if these following things be considered :

First, The law was Adam's covenant ; and he knew no other, as he was the head and representative of all mankind, that were brought into it with him, and left under it by him, though without strength to perform the condition thereof. Hence, this covenant is interwoven with our nature ; and though we have lost our father's strength, yet we still incline to the way he was set upon, as our head and representative in that covenant ; that is, by doing, to live.

This is our natural religion, and the principle which men naturally take for granted, Matth. xix. 16, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Secondly, Consider the opposition that has always been made in the world, against the doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ, by men setting up for the way of works; thereby discovering the natural tendency of the heart. It is manifest, that the great design of the gospel plan is to exalt the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, Rom. iv. 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace."—See Eph. i. 6, and chap. ii. 7—9. All gospel truths centre in Christ: so that to learn the truth, is to learn Christ, Eph. iv. 20, and to be truly taught it, is to be taught as "the truth is in Jesus," verse 21. All dispensations of grace and favour from heaven, whether to nations or particular persons, have still had something about them proclaiming the freedom of grace; as in the very first separation made by the divine favour, Cain, the elder brother is rejected, and Abel, the younger, accepted. This shines through the whole history of the Bible: but, as true it is, this has been the point principally opposed by corrupt nature. One may well say, that, of all errors in religion, since Christ the seed of the woman was preached, this of works, in opposition to free grace in him, was the first that lived, and, it is likely, will be the last that dies. There have been vast numbers of errors, which have sprung up, one after another; whereof, at length, the world became ashamed and weary, so that they died away: but this has continued, from Cain, the first author of this heresy, unto this day; and never wanted some that clave to it, even in the times of greatest light. I do not, without ground, call Cain the author of it; who, when Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, a bloody offering of the firstlings of his flock, like the publican smiting on his breast, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," advanced with his thank-offering of the fruit of the ground, Gen. iv. 3, 4, like the proud Pharisee with his "God, I thank thee," &c. For what was the cause of Cain's wrath, and of his murdering Abel? was it not that he was not accepted of God for his work? Gen. iv. 4, 5. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous," 1 John iii. 12; that is, done in faith, and accepted, when his were done without faith, and rejected, as the apostle teacheth, Heb. xi. 4. So he wrote his indignation against justification and acceptance with God through faith, in opposition to works, in the blood of his brother, to convey it down to posterity. And, since that time, the unbloody sacrifice has often swimm'd in the blood of those that rejected it.—The promise made to Abraham, of the seed in which all nations should be blessed, was

so overlouded among his posterity in Egypt, that the generality of them saw no need of that way of obtaining the blessing, till God himself confuted their error by a fiery law from Mount Sinai, which "was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come," Gal. iii. 19. I need not insist on telling you, how Moses and the prophets had still much to do, to lead the people off from the conceit of their own righteousness. The ninth chapter of Deuteronomy is entirely spent on that purpose. They were very gross in that point in our Saviour's time, in the time of the apostles, when the doctrine of free grace was most clearly preached, that error lifted up its head in the face of the clearest light; witness the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And since that time it has not been wanting; Popery being the common sink of former heresies, and the heart and life of that delusion. And, finally, it may be observed, that always as the church declined from her purity otherwise, the doctrine of free grace was obscured proportionably.

Thirdly, Such is the natural propensity of man's heart to the way of the law, in opposition to Christ, that, as the tainted vessel turns the taste of the purest liquor put into it, so the natural man turns the very gospel into law, and transforms the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. The ceremonial law was to the Jews a real gospel; which held blood, death, and translation of guilt, before their eyes continually, as the only way of salvation; yet their very table, that is, their altar, with the several ordinances pertaining thereto, Mal. i. 12, was a snare unto them, Rom. xi. 9, while they used it to make up the defects in their obedience to the moral law; and clave to it so, as to reject him, whom the altar and sacrifices pointed them to, as the subject of all; even as Hagar, whose duty was only to serve was, by their father, brought into her mistress's bed; not without a mystery in the purpose of God, "for these are the two covenants," Gal. iv. 24. Thus is the doctrine of the gospel corrupted by papists, and other enemies to the doctrine of free grace. And indeed, however natural men's heads may be set right in this point, as surely as they are out of Christ, their faith, repentance, and obedience, such as they are, are placed by them in the room of Christ and his righteousness; and so trusted to, as if by these they fulfilled a new law.

Fourthly, Great is the difficulty, in Adam's sons, of their parting with the law as a covenant of works. None part with it, in that respect, but those whom the power of the Spirit of grace separates from it. The law is our first husband, and gets every one's virgin love. When Christ comes to the soul, he finds it married to the law, so as it neither can nor will be married to another, till it

be obliged to part with the first husband, as the apostle teaches, Rom. vii. 1—4. Now, that you may see what sort of a parting this is, consider,

First, It is death, Rom. vii. 4; Gal. ii. 19. Entreaties will not prevail with the soul here; it saith to the first husband, as Ruth to Naomi, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." And here sinners are true to their word; they die to the law, before they are married to Christ. Death is hard to every body; but what difficulty, do you imagine, must a loving wife, on her deathbed, find in parting with her husband, the husband of her youth, and with the dear children she has brought forth to him? The law is that husband; all the duties performed by the natural man are these children. What a struggle, as for life, will be in the heart before they are parted? I may have occasion to touch upon this afterwards; in the mean time, take the apostle's short but pithy description of it, Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." They go about to establish their own righteousness, like an eager disputant in schools, seeking to establish the point in question; or, like a tormentor, extorting a confession from one upon the rack. They go about to establish it, to make it stand: their righteousness is like a house built on the sand; it cannot stand, but they would have it to stand: it falls, they set it up again; but still it tumbles down on them; yet they cease not to go about to make it stand. But wherefore all this pains about a tottering righteousness? Because, such as it is, it is their own. What sets them against Christ's righteousness? Why, that would make them free grace's debtors for all; and that is what the proud heart can by no means submit to. Here lies the stress of the matter, Psalm x. 4, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek," to read it without the supplement, in other terms, it means, "He cannot dig, and to beg he is ashamed." Such is the struggle before the soul dies to the law. But what speaks yet more of this woful disposition of the heart, nature oft-times gets the mastery of the disease: insomuch that the soul, which was like to have died to the law while convictions were sharp and piercing, fatally recovers of the happy and promising sickness; and, what is natural, cleaves more closely than ever to the law, even as a wife brought back from the gates of death, would cleave to her husband. This is the issue of the exercises of many about their souls' ease; they are indeed brought to follow duties more closely; but they are as far from Christ as ever, if not farther.

Secondly, It is a violent death, Rom. vii. 4, "Ye are become dead to the law," being killed, slain, or put to death, as the word bears. The law itself has a great hand in this; the husband gives the wound, Gal. ii. 19, "I through the law am dead to the law." The soul that dies this death, is like a loving wife matched with a rigorous husband; she does what she can to please him, yet he is never pleased, but harrases and beats her till she breaks her heart, and death sets her free: this will afterwards more fully appear. Thus it is made evident, that men's hearts are naturally bent to the way of the law, and lie cross to the gospel method: and the second article of the charge against you that are unregenerate is verified, namely, that you are enemies to the Son of God.

(3.) You are enemies to the spirit of God. He is the Spirit of holiness: the natural man is unholy, and loves to be so, and therefore resists the Holy Ghost, Acts vii. 51. The work of the Spirit is to convince the world of "sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John xvi. 8. But O, how do men strive to ward off these convictions, as much as they ward off a blow, threatening the loss of a right eye, or a right hand; If the Spirit of the Lord dart them in, so that they cannot avoid them; the heart says, in effect, as Ahab to Elijah, whom he both hated and feared, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" And indeed they treat him as an enemy, doing their utmost to stifle convictions, and to murder these harbingers that come to prepare the Lord's way into the soul. Some fill their hands with business, to put their convictions out of their heads, as Cain, who set about building a city; some put them off with delays and fair promises, as Felix did; some will sport them away in company, and some sleep them away. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification; whose work it is to subdue lusts, and and burn up corruption: how then can the natural man, whose lusts are to him as his limbs, yea, as his life, fail of being an enemy to him?

(4.) You are enemies to the law of God. Though the natural man desires to be under the law, as a covenant of works, choosing that way of salvation, in opposition to the mystery of Christ; yet as it is a rule of life to him, requiring universal holiness, and forbidding all manner of impurity, he is an enemy to it; "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. For, 1. There is no unrenewed man, who is not wedded to some one lust or another, which his heart can by no means part with. Now that he cannot bring up his inclinations to the holy law, he would fain have the law brought down to his inclinations: a plain evidence of the enmity of the heart against it. Therefore, "to delight in the

law of God after the inward man," is proposed in the word as a mark of a gracious soul, Rom. vii. 22; Psalm i. 2. It is from this natural enmity of the heart against the law, that all the pharisaical glosses upon it have arisen; whereby the commandment, which is in itself exceeding broad, has been made very narrow, to the intent that it might be the more agreeable to the natural disposition of the heart. 2. The law, laid home on the natural conscience in its spirituality, irritates corruption. The nearer it comes, nature rises the higher against it. In that case it is as oil to the fire, which instead of quenching it, makes it flame the more: "When the commandment came, sin revived," says the apostle, Rom. vii. 9. What reason can be assigned for this, but the natural enmity of the heart against the holy law? Unmortified corruption, the more it is opposed, the more it rages. Let us conclude then, that the unregenerate are heart-enemies to God, his Son, his Spirit, and his law; that there is a natural contrariety, opposition, and enmity in the will of man to God himself, and his holy will.

5. There is in the will of man contumacy against the Lord. Man's will is naturally wilful in an evil course; he will have his will, though it should ruin him: it is with him, as with the leviathan, Job xli. 29, "Darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear." The Lord calls to him by his word; says to him, as Paul to the jailor, when he was about to kill himself, "Do thyself no harm:" sinner, "why will you die?" Ezek. xviii. 31. But they will not hearken; every one turneth to his course, "as the horse rusheth into the battle," Jer. viii. 6. We have a promise of life, in form of a command, Prov. iv. 4, "Keep my commandments, and live:" it speaks impenitent sinners to be self-destroyers, wilful self-murderers. They transgress the command of living; as if one's servant should wilfully starve himself to death, or greedily drink a cup of poison, which his master commands him to forbear: even so do they; they will not live, they will die, Prov. viii. 36, "All they that hate me, love death."—O what a heart is this! It is a stony heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, hard and inflexible as a stone: mercies melt it not, judgments break it not; yet it will break ere it bend. It is an insensible heart: though there be upon the sinner a weight of sin, which makes the earth to stagger; although there is a weight of that wrath on him, which makes the devils to tremble; yet he goes lightly under the burden; he feels not the weight any more than a stone would, till the Spirit of the Lord quickens him so far as to feel it.

6. The unrenewed will is wholly perverse, in reference to man's chief and highest end. The natural man's chief end is not God, but

himself. The being of man is merely relative, dependent, borrowed: he has neither being nor goodness originally from himself; but all he has is from his God, as the first cause and spring of all perfection, natural or moral: dependence is woven into his very nature: so that if God were totally to withdraw from him, he would dwindle into a mere nothing. Seeing then whatever man is, he is of him, surely in whatever he is, he should be to him, as the waters which came from the sea, do of course return thither again. Thus man was created, directly looking to God, as his chief end: but, falling into sin, he fell off from God, and turned into himself; and, like a traitor usurping the throne, he gathers in the rents of the crown to himself. This infers a total apostasy and universal corruption in man; for where the chief and last end is changed, there can be no goodness there. This is the case of all men in their natural state, Psalm xiv. 2, 3, "The Lord looked down—to see if there were any that did—seek God. They are all gone aside" from God; they seek not God, but themselves. Though many fair shreds of morality are to be found amongst them, yet "there is none that doth good, no, not one;" for though some of them in appearance run well, yet they are still off the way; they never aim at the right mark. They are "lovers of their own selves," 2 Tim. iii. 2, "more than God," ver. 4. Wherefore Jesus Christ, having come into the world to bring men back to God again, came to bring them out of themselves in the first place, Matt. xvi. 24. The godly groan under this woful disposition of the heart: they acknowledge it, and set themselves against it, in its subtle and dangerous insinuations. The unregenerate, though most insensible of it, are under the power thereof; and whithersoever they turn themselves, they cannot move beyond the circle of self: they seek themselves, they act for themselves; their natural, civil, and religious actions, from whatever springs they come, all run into, and meet in the dead sea of self.

Most men are so far from making God their chief end, in their natural and civil actions, that in these matters, God is not in all their thoughts. Their eating and drinking, and such like natural actions, are for themselves; their own pleasure or necessity, without any higher end, Zech. vii. 6, "Did ye not eat for yourselves?" They have no eye to the glory of God in these things, as they ought to have, 1 Cor. x. 31. They do not eat and drink to keep up their bodies for the Lord's service; they do them not because God has said, "Thou shalt not kill;" neither do those drops of sweetness, which God has put into the creature, raise up their souls towards that ocean of delights that is in the Creator; though they be a sign

hung out at heaven's door, to tell men of the fulness of goodness that is in God himself, Acts xiv. 17. But it is self, and not God, that is sought in them, by natural men. And what are the unrenewed man's civil actions, such as buying, selling, working, &c., but fruit to himself? Hos. x. 1. So marrying, and giving in marriage, are reckoned amongst the sins of the old world, Matt. xxiv. 38: for they have no eye to God therein, to please him; but all they had in view was to please themselves, Gen. vi. 3. Finally, self is natural men's highest end, in their religious actions. They perform duties for a name, Matt. vi. 1, 2, or some other worldly interest, John vi. 26. Or if they be more refined, it is their peace, and at most their salvation from hell and wrath, or their own eternal happiness, that is their chief and highest end, Matt. xix. 16—22. Their eyes are held, that they see not the glory of God. They seek God indeed, yet not for himself, but for themselves. They seek him not at all, but for their own welfare: so their whole life is woven into one web of practical blasphemy; making God the means, and self their end; yea, their chief end.

Thus I have given you a rude draught of man's will, in his natural state, drawn by scripture, and men's own experience. Call it no more Naomi, but Marah; for bitter it is, and a root of bitterness. Call it no more free-will, but slavish lust; free to evil, but free from good, till regenerating grace loosens the bands of wickedness. Now, since all must be wrong, and nothing can be right, where the understanding and will are so corrupt; I shall briefly despatch what remains, as following, of course, on the corruption of these prime faculties of the soul.

III. *The Corruption of the Affections.*

The *affections* are corrupted. The unrenewed man's affections are wholly disordered and distempered: they are as the unruly horse, that either will not receive, or violently runs away with, the rider. So man's heart naturally is a mother of abominations, Mark vii. 21, 22, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness," &c. The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a spiritual monster. His heart is, where his feet should be, fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on, Acts ix. 5. His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven; and therefore God calls to him to turn. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love; joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor, Prov. ii. 13—15. They hit

the point indeed, as Caiaphas did in another case, who cried out against the apostles, as men that turned the world upside down, Acts xvii. 6; for that is the work which the gospel has to do in the world, where sin has put all things so out of order, that heaven lies under, and earth a-top. If the unrenewed man's affections be set on lawful objects, then they are either excessive or defective. Lawful enjoyments of the world have sometimes too little, but mostly too much of them; either they get not their due, or, if they do, it is measure pressed down, and running over. Spiritual things have always too little of them. In a word, they are never right; only evil.

Now, here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says, the man should not stoop; the will, opposite to the will of God, says, he will not; and the corrupt affections, rising against the Lord, in defence of the corrupt will, say, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power comes, in which he is made a new creature.

IV. *Corruption of the Conscience.*

The *conscience* is corrupt and defiled, Titus i. 15. It is an evil eye, that fills one's conversation with much darkness and confusion; being naturally unable to do its office: till the Lord, by letting in new light to the soul, awakens the conscience, it remains sleepy and inactive. Conscience can never do its work, but according to the light it has to work by. Wherefore, seeing the natural man cannot spiritually discern spiritual things, 1 Cor. ii. 14, the conscience naturally is quite useless in that point; being cast into such a deep sleep, that nothing but saving illumination from the Lord can set it on work in that matter. The light of the natural conscience in good and evil, sin and duty, is very defective; therefore, though it may check for grosser sins, yet, to the more subtile workings of sin, it cannot check them, because it discerns them not. Thus, conscience will fly in the face of many, if at any time they be drunk, swear, neglect prayer, or be guilty of any gross sin; who otherwise have a profound peace, though they live in the sin of unbelief, and are strangers to spiritual worship, and the life of faith. Natural light being but faint and languishing in many things which it reaches, conscience, in that case, shoots like a stitch in one's side, which quickly goes off: its incitements to duty, and checks for, and struggles against sin, are very remiss, which the natural man easily gets over. But because there is a false light in the dark mind, the natural conscience following the same, will call evil good, and good evil, Isa. v.

20. So it is often found like a blind and furious horse, which violently runs down himself, his rider, and all that comes in his way. John xvi. 2, "Whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." When the natural conscience is awakened by the Spirit of conviction, it will indeed rage and roar, and put the whole man in a dreadful consternation; awfully summon all the powers of the soul to help in a strait; make the stiff heart to tremble, and the knees to bow; set the eyes weeping, the tongue confessing; and oblige the man to cast out the goods into the sea, which he apprehends are likely to sink the ship of the soul, though the heart still goes after them. Yet it is an evil conscience which naturally leads to despair, and will do it effectually, as in Judas' case; unless either lusts prevail over it, to lull it asleep, as in the case of Felix, Acts xxiv. 25, or the blood of Christ prevail over it, sprinkling and purging it from dead works, as in the case of all true converts, Heb. ix. 14, and x. 22.

V. *Corruption of the Memory.*

Even the *memory* bears evident marks of this corruption. What is good and worthy to be remembered, as it makes but slender impression, so that impression easily wears off; the memory, as a leaking vessel, lets it slip, Heb. ii. 1. As a sieve that is full when in the water, lets all go when it is taken out, so is the memory with respect to spiritual things. But how does it retain what ought to be forgotten? Sinful things so bear in themselves upon it, that though men would fain have them out of mind, yet they stick there like glue. However forgetful men are in other things, it is hard to forget an injury. So the memory often furnishes new fuel to old lusts; makes men in old age re-act the sins of their youth, while it presents them again to the mind with delight, which thereupon returns to its former lusts. Thus it is like a riddle, that lets through the pure grain, and keeps the refuse. Thus far of the corruption of the soul.

VI. *Corruption of the Body.*

The *body* itself also is partaker of this corruption and defilement, so far as it is capable thereof. Wherefore the Scripture calls it sinful flesh, Rom. viii. 3. We may take this up in two things. 1. The natural temper, or rather distemper of the bodies of Adam's children, as it is an effect of original sin, so it has a natural tendency to sin, incites to sin, leads the soul into snares, yea, is itself

a snare to the soul. The body is a furious beast, of such a temper, that if it be not beat down, kept under, and brought into subjection, it will cast the soul into much sin and misery, 1 Cor. ix. 27. There is a vileness in the body, Phil. iii. 21, which, as to the saints, will never be removed, until it be melted down in the grave, and cast into a new form at the resurrection, to come forth a spiritual body; and will never be carried off from the bodies of those who are not partakers of the resurrection to life. 2. It serves the soul in many sins. Its members are instruments or weapons of unrighteousness, whereby men fight against God, Rom. vi. 13. The eyes and ears are open doors, by which impure motions and sinful desires enter the soul: the tongue is "a world of iniquity," James iii. 6, "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison," ver. 8: by it the impure heart vents a great deal of its filthiness. "The throat is an open sepulchre," Rom. iii. 13. The feet run the devil's errands, ver. 15. The belly is made a god, Phil. iii. 19, not only by drunkards and riotous livers, but by every natural man, Zech. vii. 6. So the body naturally is an agent for the devil, and a magazine of armour against the Lord.

To conclude—man by nature is wholly corrupted: "From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in him." As in a dunghill every part contributes to the corruption of the whole, so the natural man, while in this state, grows still worse and worse: the soul is made worse by the body, and the body by the soul: and every faculty of the soul serves to corrupt another more and more. This much for the second general head.

III. I shall show how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted. The heathens perceived that man's nature was corrupted; but how sin had entered, they could not tell. But the Scripture is very plain on that point, Rom. v. 12, 19, "By one man sin entered into the world. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Adam's sin corrupted man's nature, and leavened the whole lump of mankind. We putrefied as in Adam as our root. The root was poisoned, and so the branches were envenomed: the vine turned into the vine of Sodom, and so the grapes became grapes of gall. Adam, by his sin, became not only guilty, but corrupt; and so transmits guilt and corruption to his posterity, Gen. v. 3; Job xiv. 4. By his sin he stripped himself of his original righteousness, and corrupted himself; we were in him representatively, being represented by him as our moral head in the covenant of works: we were in him seminally, as our natural head; hence we fell in him, and by his disobedience were made sinners, as Levi, in the loins of Abraham, paid tithes, Heb. vii. 9, 10. His first sin is imputed to us;

therefore we are justly left under the want of his original righteousness, which being given to him as a common person, he cast off by his sin: and this is necessarily followed, in him and us, by the corruption of the whole nature; righteousness and corruption being two contraries, one of which must needs always be in man, as a subject capable thereof. And Adam, our common father, being corrupt, we are so too; for “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?”

Although it is sufficient to prove the righteousness of this dispensation, that it was from the Lord, who doeth all things well; yet, to silence the murmurings of proud nature, let these few things farther be considered. 1. In the covenant wherein Adam represented us, eternal happiness was promised to him and his posterity, upon condition of his, that is, Adam’s perfect obedience, as the representative of all mankind: whereas, if there had been no covenant, they could not have pleaded eternal life upon their most perfect obedience, but might have been, after all, reduced to nothing; notwithstanding, by natural justice, they would have been liable to God’s eternal wrath, in case of sin. Who in that case would not have consented to that representation? 2. Adam had a power to stand given him, being made upright. He was as capable of standing for himself and all his posterity, as any after him could be for themselves. This trial of mankind in their head would soon have been over, and the crown for them all, had he stood: whereas, had his posterity been independent of him, and every one left to act for himself, the trial would have been continually carrying on, as men came into the world. 3. He had the strongest natural affection to engage him, being our common father. 4. His own stock was in the ship, his all lay at stake, as well as ours. He had no separate interest from ours; but if he forget ours, he must necessarily forget his own. 5. If he had stood, we should have had the light of his mind, the righteousness of his will, and holiness of his affections, with entire purity, transmitted unto us; we could not have fallen; the crown of glory, by his obedience, would have been for ever secured to him and his. This is evident from the nature of a federal representation, and no reason can be given why, seeing we are lost by Adam’s sin, we should not have been saved by his obedience. On the other hand, it is reasonable, that he falling, we should with him bear the loss. 6. Those who quarrel with this dispensation, must renounce their part in Christ; for we are no otherwise made sinners by Adam, than we are made righteous by Christ, from whom we have both imputed and inherent righteousness. We no more made choice of the second Adam for our head and representative in the

second covenant, than we did of the first Adam in the first covenant.

Let none wonder that such a horrible change could be brought on by one sin of our first parents; for thereby they turned away from God, as their chief end, which necessarily infers a universal depravation. Their sin was a complication of evils, a total apostasy from God, a violation of the whole law: by it they broke all the ten commands at once. 1. They chose new gods. They made their belly their god, by their sensuality: self their god, by their ambition; yea, and the devil their god, by believing him, and disbelieving their Maker. 2. Though they received, yet they observed not that ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. They contemned that ordinance so plainly enjoined them, and would needs carve out to themselves how to serve the Lord. 3. They took the name of the Lord their God in vain; despising his attributes, his justice, truth, power, &c. They grossly profaned the sacramental tree; abused his word, by not giving credit to it; abused that creature of his which they should not have touched; and violently misconstrued his providence, as if God, by forbidding them that tree, had been standing in the way of their happiness; therefore he suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment. 4. They remembered not the Sabbath to keep it holy, but put themselves out of a condition to serve God aright on his own day; neither kept they that state of holy rest wherein God had put them. 5. They cast off their relative duties; Eve forgets herself, and acts without the advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation, and confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. They honoured not their Father in heaven; and therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them. 6. They ruined themselves, and all their posterity. 7. Gave themselves up to luxury and sensuality. 8. Took away what was not their own, against the express will of the great Owner. 9. They bore false witness, and lied against the Lord, before angels, devils, and one another; in effect giving out, that they were hardly dealt by, and that Heaven grudged their happiness. 10. They were discontented with their lot, and coveted an evil covetousness to their house; which ruined both them and theirs. Thus was the image of God on man defaced all at once.

IV. I shall now apply this Doctrine of the Corruption of Nature.

USE I. For information. Is man's nature wholly corrupted? Then,

1. No wonder that the grave opens its devouring mouth for us, as

soon as the womb has cast us forth; and that the cradle is turned into a coffin, to receive the corrupt lump: for we are all, in a spiritual sense, dead-born; yea, and filthy, Psalm xiv. 3, noisome, rank, and stinking as a corrupt thing, as the word imports. Then let us not complain of the miseries we are exposed to at our entrance into, nor of the continuance of them while we are in the world. Here is the venom that has poisoned all the springs of earthly enjoyments we have to drink of. It is the corruption of man's nature that brings forth all the miseries of human life, in churches, states, and families, and in men's souls and bodies.

2. Behold here, as in a glass, the spring of all the wickedness, profanity, and formality, which is in the world; the source of all the disorders in thy own heart and life. Every thing acts like itself, agreeable to its own nature; and so corrupt man acts corruptly. You need not wonder at the sinfulness of your own heart and life, nor at the sinfulness and perverseness of others; if a man be crooked, he cannot but halt; and if the clock be set wrong, how can it point the hour aright?

3. See here, why sin is so pleasant, and religion such a burden to carnal spirits: sin is natural, holiness not so. Oxen cannot feed in the sea, nor fishes in the fruitful fields. A swine brought into a palace would soon get away again, to wallow in the mire; and corrupt nature tends ever to impurity.

4. Learn from this the nature and necessity of regeneration. *First*, This discovers the nature of regeneration, in these two things: 1. It is not a partial, but a total change, though imperfect in this life. Thy whole nature is corrupted; therefore the cure must go through every part. Regeneration makes not only a new head, for knowledge, but a new heart, and new affections, for holiness—"All things become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. If a man, having received many wounds, should be cured of them all, save one only, he might bleed to death by that one as well as by a thousand: so, if the change go not through the whole man, it is naught. 2. It is not a change made by human industry, but by the mighty power of the Spirit of God. A man must be born of the Spirit, John iii. 5. Accidental diseases may be cured by men; but those which are natural, not without a miracle, John ix. 32. The change wrought upon men by good education, or forced upon them by a natural conscience, though it may pass among men for a saving change, yet it is not so; for our nature is corrupt, and none but the God of nature can change it. Though a gardener, by ingrafting a pear branch into an apple tree, may make the apple tree bear pears, yet the art of man cannot change the nature of the apple tree: so a man may fix

a new life to his old heart, but he can never change the heart. *Secondly*, This also shews the necessity of regeneration. It is absolutely necessary, in order to salvation, John iii. 4, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem; but thou art wholly unclean, while in thy natural state. If every member of thy body were dis-jointed, each joint must be loosened before the members can be set right again. This is the case of thy soul, as thou hast heard: therefore thou must be born again; otherwise thou shalt never see heaven, unless it be afar off, as the rich man in hell did. Deceive not thyself: no mercy of God, no blood of Christ, will bring thee to heaven in thy unregenerate state: for God will never open a fountain of mercy to wash away his own holiness and truth; nor did Christ shed his precious blood, to blot out the truths of God, or to overturn God's measures about the salvation of sinners. Heaven! What would you do there, you who are not born again? you who are no ways fitted for Christ the head? That would be a strange sight! a holy head, and members wholly corrupt! a head full of treasures of grace, and members wherein are no thing but treasures of wickedness! a head obedient to the death, and heels kicking against heaven! You are no better adapted for the society above, than beasts are for converse with men. Thou art a hater of true holiness; and at the first sight of a saint there, wouldst cry out—"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!" Nay, the unrenewed man, if it were possible he could go to heaven in that state, would go to it no otherwise than now he comes to the duties of holiness; that is, leaving his heart behind him.

USE II. For lamentation. Well may we lament thy case, O natural man! for it is the saddest case one can be in out of hell. It is time to lament for thee; for thou art dead already, dead while thou livest: thou carriest about with thee a dead soul in a living body; and because thou art dead, thou canst not lament thy own case. Thou art loathsome in the sight of God; for thou art altogether corrupt; thou hast no good in thee. Thy soul is a mass of darkness, rebellion, and vileness, before the Lord. Thou thinkest, perhaps, that thou hast a good heart to God, good inclinations, and good desires: but God knows there is nothing good in thee: "Every imagination of thine heart is only evil continually." Thou canst do no good; thou canst do nothing but sin. For,

1. Thou art the servant of sin, Rom. vi. 17, and therefore free from righteousness, ver. 20. Whatever righteousness be, poor soul, thou art free from it; thou dost not, thou canst not meddle with it. Thou art under the dominion of sin; a dominion where righteousness

can have no place. Thou art a child and servant of the devil, seeing thou art yet in a state of nature, John viii. 44—"Ye are of your father the devil." And, to prevent any mistake, consider, that sin and Satan have two sort of servants: 1. There are some employed, as it were, in coarser work; those bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, having no form of godliness; but are profane, grossly ignorant, mere moralists, not so much as performing the external duties of religion, but living in the view of the world as sons of the earth, only attending to earthly things, Phil. iii. 19. 2. There are some employed in a more refined sort of service to sin, who carry the devil's mark in their right hand; which they can and do hide from the eyes of the world. These are close hypocrites, who sacrifice as much to the corrupt mind, as the others to the flesh, Eph. ii. 3. These are ruined by a more secret trade of sin: pride, unbelief, self-seeking, and the like, swarm in, and prey upon their corrupted, wholly corrupted souls. Both are servants of the same house; the latter as far as the former from righteousness.

2. How is it possible that thou shouldst be able to do any good, thou whose nature is wholly corrupt?—Can fruit grow where there is no root? or, Can there be an effect without a cause? "Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?" If thy nature be wholly corrupt, as indeed it is, all thou dost is certainly so too; for no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause. "Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?" Matth. vii. 18.

Ah! what a miserable spectacle is he that can do nothing but sin! Thou art the man, whoever thou art, that art yet in thy natural state. Hear, O sinner, what is thy case.

(1.) Innumerable sins compass thee about: mountains of guilt are lying upon thee; floods of impurities overwhelm thee, living lusts of all sorts roll up and down in the dead sea of thy soul, where no good can breathe, because of the corruption there. Thy lips are unclean; the opening of thy mouth is as the opening of an unripe grave, full of stench and rottenness, Rom. iii. 13, "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Thy natural actions are sin; for "when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?" Zeeh. vii. 6. Thy civil actions are sin, Prov. xxi. 4, "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." Thy religious actions are sin, Prov. xv. 8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." The thoughts and imaginations of thy heart are only evil continually. A deed may be soon done, a word soon spoken, a thought swiftly pass through the heart; but each of these is an item in thy accounts. O sad reckoning! as many thoughts, words, and actions, so many sins. The longer thou livest, thy ac-

counts swell the more. Should a tear be dropt for every sin, thine head must be waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears; for nothing but sin comes from thee. Thy heart frames nothing but evil imaginations: there is nothing in thy life but what is framed by thine heart; and, therefore, there is nothing in thy heart or life but evil.

(2.) All thy religion, if thou hast any, is lost labour, as to acceptance with God, or any saving effect on thyself. Art thou yet in thy natural state? Truly, then, thy duties are sins, as was just now hinted. Would not the best wine be loathsome in a vessel wherein there is no pleasure? So is the religion of an unregenerate man. Under the law, the garment which the flesh of the sacrifice was carried in, though it touched other things, did not make them holy: but he that was unclean touching any thing, whether common or sacred made it unclean. Even so thy duties cannot make thy corrupt soul holy, though they in themselves be good; but thy corrupt heart defiles them, and makes them unclean, Hag. ii. 12—14. Thou wast wont to divide thy works into two sorts; some good, some evil: but thou must count again, and put them all under one head: for God writes on them all "only evil." This is lamentable: it will be no wonder to see those beg in harvest, who fold their hands, and sleep in seed-time; but to be labouring with others in the spring, and yet have nothing to reap when the harvest comes, is a very sad case, and will be the case of all professors living and dying in their tural state.

(3.) Thou canst not help thyself. What canst thou do, to take away thy sin, who art wholly corrupt? Nothing, truly but sin. If a natual man begin to relent, drop a tear for his sin, and reform, presently the corrupt nature takes merit itself; he has done much himself, he thinks, and God cannot but do more for him on that account. In the mean time, he does nothing but sin: so that the fitness of the merit is, that the leper be put out of the camp, the dead soul buried out of sight, and the corrupt lump cast into the pit. How canst thou think to recover thyself by any thing which thou canst do? Will mud and filth wash out filthiness; and wilt thou purge out sin by sinning? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one," Job xiv. 4. This is the case of thy corrupt soul; not to be recovered but by Jesus Christ. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help," Hos. xiii. 9. Thou art poor indeed, extremely "miserable and poor," Rev. iii. 17. Thou hast no shelter, but a refuge of lies; no garment for thy soul, but filthy rags; nothing to nourish it,

but husks that cannot satisfy. And more than this, thou didst get such a bruise in the loins of Adam, as is not yet cured, so that thou art without strength, as well as ungodly, Rom. v. 6; unable to do, or work for thyself; nay, more than all this, thou canst not so much as think aright, but art lying helpless, as an infant exposed in the open field, Ezek. xvi. 5.

USE III. I exhort you to believe this sad truth. Alas! it is evident that it is very little believed in the world. Few are concerned to get their corrupt conversation changed; but fewer, by far, to get their nature changed. Most men know not what they are, nor what spirits they are of; they are as the eye, which, seeing many things, never sees itself. But until you know every one the plague of his own heart, there is no hope of your recovery. Why will you not believe it? You have plain Scripture testimony for it; but you are loath to entertain such an ill opinion of yourselves. Alas! this is the nature of your disease, Rev. iii. 17, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Lord, open their eyes to see it, before they die of it, and in hell lift up their eyes, and see what they will not see now.

I shall close this weighty point, of the corruption of man's nature, with a few words as to another doctrine from the text.

God's specially noticing our Natural Corruption.

DOCTRINE—God takes special notice of our natural corruption, or the sin of our nature. This he testifies two ways: 1. By his word, as in the text,—“God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually;” see Psalm xiv. 2, 3. 2. By his works. God marks his particular notice of it, and displeasure with it, as in many of his works, so especially in these two.

1. In the death of the infant children of men. Many miseries they have been exposed to: they were drowned in the deluge, consumed in Sodom by fire and brimstone; they have been slain with the sword, dashed against the stones, and are still dying ordinary deaths.—What is the true cause of this? On what ground does a holy God thus pursue them? Is it the sin of their parents? That may be the occasion of the Lord's raising the process against them; but it must be their own sin that is the ground of the sentence passing on them: for “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” saith God, Ezek. xviii. 4. Is it their own actual sin? They have none.—But as men do with serpents, which they kill at first sight, before they have done any hurt, because of their venomous nature; so it is in this case.

2. In the birth of the elect children of God.—When the Lord is about to change their nature, he makes the sin of their nature lie heavy on their spirits. When he means to let out their corruption, the lance goes deep into their souls, reaching to the root of sin, Rom. vii. 7—9. The flesh, or corruption of nature, is pierced, being crucified, as well as the affections and lusts, Gal. v. 24.

USE. Let us then have a special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature. God sees it: O that we saw it too, and that sin were ever before us! What avails it to notice other sins, while this mother-sin is not noticed? Turn your eyes inward to the sin of your nature. It is to be feared, that many have this work to begin yet; that they have shut the door, while the grand thief is yet in the house undiscovered. This is a weighty point; and in handling of it, I shall notice these four heads:

Men overlooking their Natural Sin.

1. I shall, for conviction, point at some evidences of men's overlooking the sin of their nature, which yet the Lord takes particular notice of. 1. Men's looking on themselves with such confidence, as if they were in no hazard of gross sins. Many would take it very unkindly to get such a caution as Christ gave his apostles, Luke xxi. 34, "Take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness." If any should suppose them to break out in gross abominations, each would be ready to say, "Am I a dog?" It would raise the pride of their hearts, but not their fear and trembling, because they know not the corruption of their nature. 2. Want of tenderness towards those that fall. Many, in that case, cast off all feelings of Christian compassion, for they do not consider themselves, lest they also be tempted, Gal. vi. 1. Men's passions are often highest against the faults of others, when sin sleeps soundly in their own breasts. David, even when he was at his worst, was most violent against the faults of others. While his conscience was asleep under his own guilt, in the matter of Uriah, the Spirit of the Lord takes notice, that his anger was greatly kindled against the man in the parable, 2 Sam. xii. 5. And, on good grounds, it is thought it was at the same time that he treated the Ammonites so cruelly, as is related, ver. 31, "Putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick-kiln." Grace makes men zealous against sin in others, as well as in themselves: but eyes turned inward to the corruption of nature, clothe them with pity and compassion; and fill them with thankfulness to the Lord, that they themselves were not the persons left to be such

spectacles of human frailty. 3. There are not a few, who, if they be kept from afflictions in worldly things, and from gross outbreakings in their conversation, know not what it is to have a sad heart. If they meet with a cross, which their proud hearts cannot stoop to bear, they are ready to say, O to be gone! but the corruption of their nature never makes them long for heaven. Lusts, scandalously breaking out at a time, will mar their peace: but the sin of their nature never makes them a heavy heart. 4. Delaying of repentance, in hopes to set about it afterwards. Many have their own appointed time for repentance and reformation: as if they were such complete masters over their lusts, that they can allow them to gather more strength, and yet overcome them. They take up resolutions to amend, without an eye to Jesus Christ, union with him, and strength from him; a plain evidence that they are strangers to themselves; so they are left to themselves, and their flourishing resolutions wither; for, as they see not the necessity, so they get not the benefit, of the dew from heaven to water them. 5. Men's venturing freely on temptations, and promising liberally in their own strength. They cast themselves fearlessly into temptation, in confidence of their coming off fairly: but, were they sensible of the corruption of their nature, they would be cautious of entering on the devil's ground; as one girt about with bags of gunpowder, would be unwilling to walk where sparks of fire are flying, lest he should be blown up. Self-jealousy well becomes Christians. "Lord, is it I?" They that know the deceit of their bow, will not be very confident that they shall hit the mark. 6. Ignorance of heart-plagues. The knowledge of the plagues of the heart is a rare qualification. There are indeed some of them written in such great characters, that he who runs may read them: but there are others more subtle, which few discern. How few are there, to whom the bias of the heart to unbelief is a burden? Nay, they perceive it not. Many have had sharp convictions of other sins, that were never to this day convinced of their unbelief; though that is the sin especially aimed at in a thorough conviction, John xvi. 8, 9, "He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." A disposition to establish our own righteousness, is a weed that naturally grows in every man's heart; but few labour at the plucking of it up: it lurks undiscovered. The bias of the heart to the way of the covenant of works, is a hidden plague of the heart to many. All the difficulty they find is, in getting up their hearts to duties: they find no difficulty in getting their hearts off them, and over them to Jesus Christ. How hard it is to bring men off from their own righteousness! Yea, it is very hard to convince them of their lean-

ing to it at all. 7. Pride and self-conceit. A view of the corruption of nature would be very humbling, and oblige him that has it to reckon himself the chief of sinners. Under the greatest attainments and enlargements, it would be ballast to his heart, and hide pride from his eyes. The want of thorough humiliation, piercing to the sin of one's nature, is the ruin of many professors: for digging deep makes the great difference betwixt wise and foolish builders, Luke vi. 48, 49.

Original Sin to be specially noticed.

II. I will lay before you a few things, in which you should have a special eye to original sin. 1. Have a special eye to it, in your application to Jesus Christ. Do you find any need of Christ, which sends you to him as the Physician of souls? O forget not your disease when you are with the Physician. They never yet knew well their errand to Christ, who went not to him for the sin of their nature; for his blood to take away the guilt of it, and his Spirit to break the power of it. Though, in the bitterness of your souls, you should lay before him a catalogue of your sins of omission and commission, which might reach from earth to heaven: yet, if original sin were wanting in it, assure yourselves that you have forgot the best part of the errand which a poor sinner has to the Physician of souls. What would it have availed the people of Jericho, to have set before Elisha all the vessels in their city, full of the water that was naught, if they had not led him forth to the spring, to cast in salt there? 2 Kings ii. 19—21. The application is easy. 2. Have a special eye to it in your repentance, whether in its beginning or progress; in your first repentance, and in the renewing of your repentance afterwards. Though a man be sick, there is no fear of death, if the sickness strike not to his heart: and there is as little fear of the death of sin, as long as the sin of our nature is not touched. But if you would repent indeed, let the streams lead you up to the fountain; and mourn over your corrupt nature, as the cause of all sin, in heart, lip, and life, Psalm li. 4, 5, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.—Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." 3. Have a special eye upon it in your mortification, Gal. v. 24, "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh." It is the root of bitterness that must be struck at; which the axe of mortification must be laid to, else we labour in vain. In vain do men go about to cleanse the stream, while they are at no pains about the muddy fountain: it is a vain religion to

attempt to make the life truly good, while the corruption of nature retains its ancient vigour, and the power of it is not broken. 4. You are to eye it in your daily walk. He that would walk aright, must have one eye upward to Jesus Christ, and another inward to the corruption of his own nature. It is not enough that we look about us, we must also look within us. Where the wall is weakest; there our greatest enemy lies; and there are grounds for daily watching and mourning.

Why original Sin is to be especially noticed.

III. I shall offer some reasons, why we should especially notice the sin of our nature.

1. Because of all sins, it is the most extensive and diffusive. It goes through the whole man, and spoils all. Other sins mar particular parts of the image of God, but this at once defaces the whole. A disease affecting any particular member of the body is dangerous; but that which affects the whole, is worse. The corruption of nature is the poison of the old serpent cast into the fountain of action, which infects every action, and every breathing of the soul.

2. It is the cause of all particular lusts, and actual sins, in our hearts and lives. It is the spawn which the great leviathan has left in the souls of men, from whence comes all the fry of actual sins and abominations, Mark vii. 21, "Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," &c. It is the bitter fountain: particular lusts are but rivulets running from it, which bring forth into the life a part only, and not the whole of what is within. The fountain is always above the stream: and where the water is good, it is best in the fountain; where it is bad, it is worst there. The corruption of nature being that which defiles all, it must needs be the most abominable thing.

3. It is virtually all sin: for it is the seed of all sins, which want but the occasion to set up their heads, being, in the corruption of nature as the effect in the virtue of its cause. Hence it is called "a body of death," Rom. vii. 24, as consisting of the several members belonging to such "a body of sins," Col. ii. 11, whose life lies in spiritual death. It is the cursed ground, fit to bring forth all manner of noxious weeds. As the whole nest of venomous creatures must needs be more dreadful than any few of them that come creeping forth; so the sin of thy nature, that mother of abominations, must be worse than any particular lust that appear stirring in thy heart and life. Never did every sin appear, in the conversa-

tion of the vilest wretch that ever lived ; but look thou into thy corrupt nature, and there thou mayest see all and every sin, in the seed and root thereof. There is a fulness of all unrighteousness there, Rom. i. 29. There is atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and whatsoever is vile. Possibly none of these appear to thee in thy heart ; but there is more in that unfathomable depth of wickedness than thou knowest. Thy corrupt heart is like an ant's nest, on which, while the stone lieth, none of them appear ; but take off the stone, and stir them up but with the point of a straw, you will see what a swarm is there, and how lively they be. Just such a sight would thy heart afford thee, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint he has upon it, and suffer Satan to stir it up by temptation.

4. The sin of our nature is, of all sins, the most fixed and abiding. Sinful actions, though the guilt and stain of them may remain, yet in themselves they pass away. The drunkard is not always at his cups, nor the unclean person always acting lewdness : but the corruption of nature is an abiding sin ; it remains with men in its full power, by night and by day ; at all times fixed, as with bands of iron and brass, till their nature is changed by converting grace ; and it remains even with the godly, until the death of the body, though not in its reigning power. Pride, envy, covetousness, and the like, are not always stirring in thee : but the proud, envious, carnal nature, is still with thee ; even as the clock that is wrong is not always striking wrong, but the wrong set continues with it without intermission.

5. It is the reigning sin, Rom. vi. 12, " Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." There are three things which you may observe in the corrupt heart : 1. There is in the corrupt nature the corrupt set of the heart, whereby men are unapt for all good, and fitted for all evil. This the apostle calls here " sin which reigns." 2. There are particular lusts, or dispositions of corrupt nature, which the apostle calls " the lusts thereof ;" such as pride, covetousness, &c. 3. There is one among these, which is, like Saul among the people, higher by far than the rest, namely, " the sin which doth so easily beset us," Heb. xii. 1. This we usually call the " predominant sin," because it doth, as it were reign over other particular lusts ; so that other lusts must yield to it. These three are like a river which divides itself into many streams, whereof one is greater than the rest : the corruption of nature is the river head, that has many particular lusts in which it runs ; but it chiefly disburdens itself into what is commonly called one's predominant sin. No all

of these being fed by the sin of our nature, it is evident that it is the reigning sin, which never loses its superiority over particular lusts, which live and die with it, and by it. But, as in some rivers, the main stream runs not always in one and the same channel, so particular ruling sins may be changed, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age. Now, what does it avail to reform in other things, while the reigning sin remains in its full power? What though some particular lusts be broken? If sin, the sin of our nature, keep the throne, it will set up another in its stead; as when a water-course is stopped in one place, if the fountain is not closed up, it will stream forth another way. Thus some cast off their prodigality, but covetousness comes up in its stead; some cast away their profanity, and the corruption of nature sends not its main stream that way, as before, but it runs in another channel, namely, in that of a legal disposition, self-righteousness, or the like. So that people are ruined, by their not contemplating the sin of their nature.

6. It is an hereditary evil, Psalm li. 5, "In sin did my mother conceive me." Particular lusts are not so, but in the virtue of their cause. A prodigal father may have a frugal son; but this disease is necessarily propagated in nature, and therefore hardest to cure. Surely, then, the word should be given out against this sin, as against the king of Israel, 1 Kings xxii. 31, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with this;" for this sin being broken, all other sins are broken with it; and while it stands entire, there is no victory.

How to get a View of the Corruption of Nature.

IV. That you may get a view of the corruption of your nature, I would recommend to you three things:—1. Study to know the spirituality and extent of the law of God, for that is the glass wherein you may see yourselves. 2. Observe your hearts at all times, but especially under temptation. Temptation is a fire that brings up the scum of the vile heart: carefully mark the first risings of corruption. 3. Go to God, through Jesus Christ, for illumination by his Spirit. Lay out your soul before the Lord, as willing to know the vileness of your nature: say unto him, "That which I know not, teach thou me." And be willing to take light in from the word. Believe, and you shall see. It is by the word the Spirit teacheth; but without the Spirit's teaching, all other teaching will be to little purpose. Though the gospel were to shine about you like the sun at noon-day, and this great truth were ever so plainly preached, you would never see yourselves aright, until the Spirit of the Lord light his candle within your breast: the fulness and glory

of Christ, and the corruption and vileness of our nature, are never rightly learned, but where the Spirit of Christ is the teacher.

To shut up this weighty point, let the consideration of what has been said, commend Christ to you all. You that are brought out of your natural state of corruption, unto Christ, be humble; still come to Christ, and improve your union with him, to the farther weakening of your natural corruption. Is your nature changed? It is but in part so. If you are cured, remember the cure is not yet perfected, you still go halting. Though it were better with you than it is, the remembrance of what you were by nature should keep you low. You that are yet in your natural state, take this with you: believe the corruption of your nature; and let Christ and his grace be precious in your eyes. O that you would at length be serious about the state of your souls! What do you intend to do? You must die; you must appear before the judgment-seat of God. Will you lie down and sleep another night at ease in this case? Do it not: for, before another day, you may be summoned before God's dreadful tribunal, in the grave-clothes of your corrupt state; and your vile souls be cast into the pit of destruction, as a corrupt lump, to be for ever buried out of God's sight. For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven, for you, in your natural state: there is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord; if the brittle thread of your life, which may break with a touch ere you are aware, be broken while you are in this state, you are ruined for ever, without remedy. But come speedily to Jesus Christ: he has cleansed souls as vile as yours; and he will yet "cleanse the blood that he has not cleansed," Joel iii. 21. Thus far of the sinfulness of man's natural state.

PART II.

THE MISERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE.

We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

EPHESIANS ii. 3.

HAVING shewn you the sinfulness of man's natural state, I come now to lay before you the misery of it. A *sinful* state cannot but be a *miserable* state. If sin go before, wrath follows of course. Corruption and destruction are so knit together, that the Holy Ghost calls destruction, even eternal destruction, "corruption," Gal. vi. 8. He that