

told them, the time was a-coming in which not one stone should be left upon another, but all should be thrown down. (Matt. xxiv. 1, 2.) The application be (not to all that hate us, but) to all that implacably hate God!

O, awake, arise, bestir yourselves, watch and ward ; and, above all, call-in the assistance of the “Keeper” of Israel; (Psalm cxxi. 5 ;) that, not only with all thy keeping, (Prov. iv. 23,) but with all his keeping, thy soul may be “kept by his power through faith unto salvation.” (1 Peter i. 5.)

SERMON XXIV.

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THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OPENED; WITH SOME PRACTICAL INQUIRIES RESOLVED ABOUT IT.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.—Romans viii. 14.

OUR apostle, in the close of the preceding verse, had made use of a very powerful motive to excite these Romans (and in them all others) unto mortification : “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” In this verse, he backs that motive with an argument to evince its truth and certainty : * Such as “are the sons of God shall live :” Such who are “led by the Spirit,” (namely, to “mortify the deeds of the body”) “are the sons of God :” Therefore such “shall live.”

Others consider these words, not so much as a proof of the foregoing motive, but rather as another distinct motive in themselves to promote mortification. † Such who “are led by the Spirit” thereunto, they are taken into the high and glorious relation of being “the sons of God,” or “the children of God,” as it is, verse 16. Now, what an inducement is this to Christians to live under, and comply with, the Spirit’s leading, as it directs and excites unto the “mortifying of the deeds of the body!” Both of these connexions are good ; but I prefer the first.

* *Probatio ex ejus quod proxime præcessit.*—CALVINUS. “This is the proof of the assertion which immediately precedes.”—EDIT. *Probat quod dixit: Fictis.*—ESTIUS. “He makes good his previous affirmation: ‘Ye shall live.’”—EDIT. † *Εἶτα ἕτερον τῆθεις μισθον, ἐπηγάγεν, Ὅσοι γὰρ Πνεύματι Θεοῦ αἰνοῦνται, οὗτοι εἰσιν υἱοὶ Θεοῦ.*—CHRYSOSTOMUS. “Then, placing before them another reward, he adds, ‘For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’”—EDIT. *Ἐπηγάγειτο αὐτοτερω ὅτι Ζησεσθε. Νυν μειςονα στεφανον και μισθον πλεωνα του προτερου τῆθσι, —την Δειαν υἱοθεσιαν.*—THEOPHYLACTUS. “He had before declared to them, ‘Ye shall live.’ Now he exposes to their view a greater prize and a fuller recompence than the former,—divine adoption.”—EDIT.

If we take them apart, and as they lie in themselves, so they contain these three things in them :—

1. *A glorious privilege* : the being “the sons of God.”
2. *A description of the persons to whom this privilege belongs* : they are such who “are led by the Spirit of God.”

3. *The adequateness or commensurateness between the persons described and the privilege asserted* : “As many as are led,”—just so many, and no more; all such, and none but such,—“are the sons of God.” It is inclusive or extensive to *all of them*; exclusive and limiting to *all others*.

The words are an entire proposition : “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” The subject hereof—they that “are led by the Spirit”—I am to speak unto; as to the predicate,—“they are the sons of God,”—that I shall not insist upon, further than as it is reducible under the subject.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God—*Ἀγορευται*. Some render it by *aguntur* : “As many as are acted by the Spirit :” some, by *impelluntur* : * “As many as are impelled, vigorously urged and moved, by the Spirit :” the most, by *ducuntur* : “As many as are led by the Spirit.” We have the same phrase, (with another privilege annexed,) Gal. v. 18 : “If ye be led,” *αγεσθε*, “by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

It is evident, the expression is allusive and metaphorical. And it alludes either to guides,—such as “lead” the blind, or those that are in the dark, or travellers that know not their way,—or to mothers and nurses, who take their children by the hand, such as cannot go, and therefore they “lead,” uphold, and help them. Answerably to both of these, believers “are led by the Spirit of God ;” with respect partly to their spiritual blindness and darkness, and partly to their spiritual weakness and infirmity. The Holy Ghost is both their Guide and Director, to keep them from wandering; and also their Upholder and Strengthened, to keep them from falling.

The point to be discoursed of is this :—

OBSERVATION.

That God's Spirit is a leading Spirit to and in all God's children.
—The acts and operations of this Spirit are various and multiform. Several of which are instanced in in this chapter : “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Verse 2.) “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Verse 13.) “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Verse 16.) “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according

* *Ἀγορευται* id est, *impelluntur ad sanctas actiones*.—PISCATOR. “As many as are led, that is, impelled to holy actions.”—EPIT.

to the will of God." (Verses 26, 27.) But I must confine myself to that one in the text,—the *ἡγεμονία*, "leading, conduct, manuduction," which this blessed Spirit vouchsafes to the people of God.

He is the saints' "Leader," their *Ἀγώγιος*, *Dux vitæ*, "the Guide of their life." Look : as by Christ they have *προσαγωγήν* "leading, access, admission," to God the Father in prayer ; (Eph. ii. 18 ; iii. 12 ;) so by the Spirit they have *αγωγήν*, "leading and guidance" in their whole course of life.

In the discussing of this weighty point, I will,

I. *Open the nature of the act,—the leading of the Spirit.*

II. *Propound and answer some practical inquiries about it.*

I. For the better opening of it, I must,

1. *Lay down some things more generally concerning it.*

2. *Then come to the closer and stricter explication of it.*

1. Under the first, I shall commend the following particulars to you :—

DISTINCTIONS PREMISED ABOUT THE SPIRIT'S LEADING.

(1.) *The leading of the Spirit is either general and common, or peculiar and special.*—If we consider him as God, in his joint participation of the Deity with the Father and the Son, and in his joint operations with them according to their Divine Essence ; so there is a leading by him which does extend to *all creatures* whatsoever. For all of them, by his divine power and influx, in their several beings, actions, motions, and tendencies, are disposed, ordered, governed, and overruled to the glory of the Creator and the good of the universe. Take them in all their faculties and in all their operations ; they are all excited, directed, actuated by this Spirit ; and so, in a general sense, they all come under his guidance and regency.

This also may be said to extend to *all men* ; to the unregenerate, as well as to the regenerate. "How ?" Why, as they all do act and move in and by him ; (Acts xvii. 28 ;) as he, in a common and providential way, does order and regulate all their several actions and motions : for this he does in all, as he is the first Cause and the supreme Sovereign. So that, as there is his common illumination, common conviction, common restraints, common gifts, which even the graceless partake of ; so there is, too, a common leading by him which they also have.

Now, most certainly, this is not that leading which the text speaks of ; for, this cannot be the foundation or evidence of the privilege mentioned. A common act will never entitle to a special relation. How many are thus "led by the Spirit" who yet are far from being "the sons of God !" That leading, therefore, must be here intended, which is special and peculiar to God's people,* such as will amount

* *Ductus Spiritus quo filii Dei aguntur non est generalis Dei actus quo omnia moventur ; sed est specialis gratia ; quæ filii Dei sanctificantur, in viâ salutis dirigitur ad Deum.*—PAREUS. "That leading of the Spirit by which the sons of God are led, is not a general act of God, by which all things are moved ; but it is a special grace, by which the sons of God are sanctified, and are guided to God in the way of salvation."—EDIVT. *Observare convenit esse multiplicem Spiritus actionem. Est enim universalis, quæ omnes*

to the making of the proposition here reciprocal and convertible ; thus :—All “ the sons of God are led by the Spirit ; ” and, All that “ are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. ”

(2.) *The special leading of the Spirit is extraordinary or ordinary.*—The former was confined to some persons and to some times ; and was not to extend to all saints, nor to continue in all ages. Thus the holy prophets, the apostles, were “ led by the Spirit ; ” as they were immediately inspired, guided, and moved by Him in the discharge of their extraordinary work and office. These, in the penning of the holy scriptures, and in all that they revealed of and from God, were “ acted ” and “ moved * by the Holy Ghost, ” (2 Peter i. 21.) and hereupon they were infallible in what they revealed. But this was extraordinary, and so limited and temporary. The latter leading of the Spirit, therefore, must be that which is here spoken of,—that which appertains to all God’s children and at all times. Did the apostle, when he says, “ As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God, ” mean, that as many as have extraordinary visions, revelations, inspirations, impulses, from the Spirit of God, are thus related to God, and none other ? Surely, no. Should we carry it thus high, we should exclude all but the fore-mentioned prophets and apostles from being God’s children ; which would be both sad, and also false. Wherefore it is unquestionable, that the ordinary, abiding, and permanent leading of the Spirit; and that which reaches to all believers, is here intended.

(3.) *This act of the Spirit may be considered, either as it is exerted at the first conversion, or after.*—For as we distinguish the grace of God into preventient and subsequent, so we may also distinguish of the leading of the Spirit. He leads at and in order to the first conversion ; as he then does irradiate the mind, incline the will, spiritualize the affections, and so lead or guide the whole soul to God and Christ. Then he leads after conversion : as this is done by him all along in the whole course of a Christian’s life ; for it is a continued act. The guidance of the Spirit to bring a man *into* the state of grace,—that is done but once ; but the guidance of the Spirit *in* the state of grace,—that is done daily and renewedly. The first imports the infusing of a living, vital principle into the soul ; the latter supposes this principle, and makes use of it, in the conduct of a child of God in the way of holiness. Both are here to be taken in ; yet, I conceive, the last may be most proper. And observe : these two leadings of the Spirit have a different respect to our sonship with God ; for the former constitutes it, the latter only discovers and evidences it. The Spirit, as leading me to God at the first conversion,

creaturæ sustententur ac moventur ; sunt et peculiares in hominibus, et illæ quidem variæ. Sed hic sanctificationem intelligit, quæ non nisi electos suos Dominus dignatur, dum eos sibi in filios segregat.—CALVINUS *in loc.* “ It is fitting to observe that the agency of the Spirit is manifold. For there is his universal operation, by which all creatures are sustained and moved ; and there are also his peculiar influences upon men, and those indeed of various kinds. But here the apostle refers to sanctification, which the Lord vouchsafes to none but his elect, whilst he sets them apart for himself as sons.”—EDIT.

* Φερομενοι or αγομενοι.

makes me a child of God; the Spirit, as leading me after conversion, causes it to appear that I am a child of God.

(4.) *There is the having of the Spirit, and there is the leading of the Spirit.*—We have both in this chapter: the one, verse 9: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" the other, in the text. Now, although these two be conjunct and inseparable, (whoever "have the Spirit," they are "led by the Spirit,") yet they are distinct things. To "have the Spirit," is to be made a possessor of him in his indwelling in us: to be "led by the Spirit," is our partaking of his directive influence, after we are made possessors of him. The first supposes the receiving of the Agent or principle; the second imports the operation from that Agent or principle.

The Greek expositors do much insist upon this; but with that explication of it which I do not drive at. "Observe," say they, "it is not said, 'As many as have received the Spirit are the sons of God;' but, 'As many as are led by the Spirit.'"* For, (as they gloss upon it,) many "receive" the Spirit at baptism, who yet afterwards not being "led by the Spirit" to and in a holy life, their sonship to God ceases. But this stating of the having of the Spirit I meddle not with. I consider the reception of the Spirit, not only in an external, baptismal way, but in that which is inward, real, and saving. And even this I make to be distinct from his leading: for although these are never disjoined and separated, but do always co-exist, and accompany each the other, all circumstances concurring; yet in themselves they differ, both as to order and precedence, and also as to nature and essence. The having of a soul, and then the having of the subsequent acts of that soul, are different things: so it is in that which I am upon.

2. These things, that are more general, being premised, I come to a more strict and particular explication of this leading of the Spirit.—"What is it to be 'led by' Him?"

It notes something on the Spirit's part, and something on the creatures' part. Both must be taken in, in the opening and stating of it.

THE SPECIAL ACTS INCLUDED IN THE SPIRIT'S LEADING.

(1.) *Something on the Spirit's part.* So it imports,

- (i.) *His special guidance.*
- (ii.) *His powerful inclination.*
- (iii.) *His co-operation and corroboration.*
- (iv.) *His regency and gubernation.*

(i.) *His special guidance.*—To be "led by the Spirit,"—it is to live under the blessed guidance and conduct of the Spirit. This is the notion which does most obviously comport with "leading." How

* ΟΥΚ ΕΙΠΕΝ, 'Όσοι Πνευμα ελαβον, αλλ', 'Όσοι Πνευματι Θεου αγονται.—CHRY-SOSTOMUS, whom Œcumenius and Theophylact follow. *Ideo non dicit, Qui Spiritum Dei acceperunt, sed, Qui Spiritu Dei aguntur; id est, qui illius actu obtemperant.*—MURETUS. "Hence he does not say, 'As many as have received the Spirit;' but, 'As many as are led by the Spirit,' that is, obey his impulses."—EDIT.

is the blind man "led?" Why, as he has one to direct and guide him to and in the way wherein he is to go: so here.

Of this act, as done by God and his Spirit, the scripture often speaks: "And the Lord shall guide thee continually." (Isai. lviii. 11.) "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." (Isai. xlviii. 17.) "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm lxxiii. 24.) "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalm cxliii. 10.) "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation." (Psalm xxv. 5.) "I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them." (Isai. lxi. 8.) "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." (Psalm xxxvii. 23.) "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (Isai. xxx. 21.) Here is the leading of the Spirit. What the cloud was to the Israelites in the directing of them in their motions; what the guide is to the traveller who knows not his way; that the Spirit of God is to believers,—their Guide and Director in this their journeying- and wilderness-state.

(ii.) *His powerful inclination.*—He leads not only by a naked guidance or directive light beamed into the understanding, whereby believers are brought to know God's will and what they are to do: "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" (Col. i. 9;) "proving what is acceptable to the Lord." (Eph. v. 10.) But he leads, also, by the efficacious inclining of the heart, the bowing and bending of the will, the overpowering of the affections, to close with and follow his guidance in the doing of what is good and in the shunning of what is evil.* Divines bring the whole of the Spirit's leading under two words, *monendo et movendo*: he first "counsels and directs" as to what is to be done, and then he "excites and effectually inclines" to the doing thereof. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes:" (Psalm cxix. 33:) here is the informing and directing act of the Spirit. "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness:" (Verses 35, 36:) here is the efficacious and powerful act of the Spirit. They who feel and experience this in themselves,—they are the persons that are "led by the Spirit." I shall have occasion to speak more of it in what will follow.

(iii.) *His co-operation and corroboration.*—When one leads another, both the person leading, and the person led, have their proper action and motion, and both unite and concur therein. And so it is

* *Quid est duci Spiritu Dei? Est a Spiritu Sancto, foris verbo, intus illuminatione, doceri de Dei voluntate; necnon efficaciter flecti ac regi ad volendum et faciendum ea quæ Deo placent.*—PAREUS. "What is it to be 'led by the Spirit of God?' It is to be instructed by the Holy Ghost in the will of God, outwardly by means of the word, inwardly by divine enlightenment. It is, also, to be effectually bent and directed to will and to do such things as are well-pleasing to the Lord."—EDIT.

in the saints' being "led by the Spirit," as to what is holy and good. He acts, and they act too; something there is done on his part, something on theirs too; and there is a mutual, conjunct efficiency, or agency, in both. "He acts; then they act:" *acti agunt*. And the act is theirs, and his too; theirs subjectively and formally, his in respect of excitation to it and assistance in it. They do the thing, but it is by his influx: "Thou hast wrought all our works in us." (Isai. xxvi. 12.) "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) In short, we move, we act; and the Spirit concurs and co-operates with us therein: and so we are "led by" him. Austin, when he is proving the necessity of the latter from my text, does also prove the reality and verity of the former.*

The other act of the Spirit—corroboration or strengthening—falls in with this in part. So, his leading resembles the mother's or nurse's leading the child. It being weak, not able to go alone, they take it by the hand, hold it up, join their strength with its weakness; and so they enable it to go. In like manner, the strong and mighty Spirit of God does, as it were, take weak Christians by the hand, and communicate his strength to them; by which they are enabled to do what is required of them.† As it follows in this chapter, with respect to prayer: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities;" (verse 26;) *συναντιλαμβάνεται*, "lifts with us and against us," at the other end of the burden. And so it is in all the duties of holiness; the Spirit "lifts with," helps the infirmities of believers, and strengthens them thereunto: "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." (Phil. iv. 13.) "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." (Eph. iii. 16.) I may allude to that of Elisha: "He said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands." (2 Kings xiii. 16.) So we "put" our "hands upon the bow,"—attempt to believe, pray, mortify sin, and the like; and then the Holy Spirit "puts his hand upon" ours, to confirm and strengthen us in all these. Was it not for this, we could "do nothing;" (John xv. 5;) was it not for this leading, we could not move one step in the path of holiness.

(iv.) A fourth thing included in this leading of the Spirit, is *his*

* *Dicit mihi aliquis, Ergo agimur, non agimus. Respondeo, Imò, et agis et ageris; et tunc bene agis, si a bono ageris. Spiritus enim Dei, qui te agit, agentibus adjutor est. Ipse nomen adjutoris præscribit tibi, quia et tu ipse aliquid agis.*—S. AUGUSTINUS, *Serm. xliii. de Verbis Apostoli.* "Some one will say to me, 'Then we do not act, but are actuated.' I answer, Nay: you both act and are actuated; and then you act well, when you are actuated by what is good. For the Spirit of God, who actuates you, is a helper to those who act. He gives thee the name of a helper, because thou dost thyself also perform something."—EDIT. † *Non modò Dux est Spiritus, sed etiam adjuvat vires ambulantis. Regenti infantum ritu sine illo nutricio nihil possunt.*—CONTZEN. "The Spirit of God is not only a Leader, but he also increases the strength of those who walk in his track. Those who are born again can do nothing without being led along and supported by Him, as infants are by their nurses."—EDIT.

regency and gubernation.—Where he governs, there he leads. So *vice versâ*; and his leading is ever attended with rule and authority. It is like a general's leading an army, who authoritatively disposes and orders all its motions; like Moses's leading the people of Israel, who had the rule and government over them. As to Christ, they are put together: "Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." (Isai. lv. 4.) Such a leading is this of the Spirit in gracious souls. He has the regiment of them: he commands and orders them in their course as he pleases; they are subject to his will, steered by him in their motions, as the ship is by the pilot, or the chariot by him that drives it.*

These are the things, on the Spirit's part, which do constitute his leading.

(2.) To fill this up, there is *something on the creatures' part*.—And that is, their yielding up of themselves to the guidance and conduct of the Spirit; their free, willing, spontaneous following of him in what he moves and dictates to them. Without this, it is not "leading;" for that imports motion after something that goes before. And that motion too must be voluntary; or else it is being haled and dragged, not "led."† This is the disposition and carriage of the sons of God toward the Spirit:—he excites them to be holy, heavenly-minded, to resist and mortify corruption, to pray, hear God's word, perform other religious duties; yea, to take up their cross: in all they readily comply with him. As David, in that particular case: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm xxvii. 8.) "He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." (Isai. ii. 3.) "Draw me, we will run after thee." (Canticles i. 4.) Here is the Spirit's leading, and the believer's following of him. It is set forth by "walking after the Spirit:" (Rom. viii. 1 :) it supposes a principle of life; dead things may be drawn, but they cannot properly be said to be "led." Where the spiritual life is, such do willingly conform to what the Spirit directs them unto. But this I shall say no more of in this explanatory part; it being a thing that requires our practice, rather than any large explication of it.

Thus I have opened the nature of the Spirit's leading. But, it being a point of great importance, and the due stating of it being highly necessary, upon sundry accounts; I will further speak to these four things about it:—

* Ουδε ἄλλως εἶπεν, 'Ὅσοι Πνευματι Θεου ζῶσιν, ἀλλ', 'Ὅσοι Πνευματι Θεου ἄγονται' δεικνύς ὅτι οὕτω βουλεῖται αὐτὸν Κυρίου εἶναι τῆς ἡμετέρας ζωῆς, ὡς τὸν κυβερνήτην τοῦ πλοίου, καὶ τὸν ἡνίοχον τοῦ ζευγὸς τῶν ἵππων.—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "He does not say merely, 'As many as live by the Spirit of God,' but, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God;' evidently intending that the Holy Ghost should be the Ruler of our life in the same manner as the pilot is of the course of a ship, or the charioteer of his team of horses."—EDIT. Παντὸς τοῦ βίου Ἠνίοχον καὶ Ἠγεμόνα προσήσονται.—ΘΕΟΦΥΛΑΚΤΟΣ. "They will choose him as the Director and Leader of their whole life."—EDIT. Ἀγόνται, τοῦτεστι, κυβερνῶνται καὶ ἡνιοχούνται.—THEOPHYLACTUS. "They 'are led,' that is, are piloted and guided."—EDIT. † BISHOP HALL'S "Remains," p. 147. HOLLINGSWORTH "Of the Spirit," p. 65.

FOUR THINGS OPENED ABOUT THE SPIRIT'S LEADING.

1. *The matter or terminus,—what the Spirit leads unto.*
2. *The rule by which he leads.*
3. *The way and manner wherein he leads.*
4. *The extent and measure of it.*

THE MATTER OF IT.

1. *The matter,—what the Spirit leads unto.*—This is of great extent ; but all may be reduced to these two things,—truth and holiness. Truth is seated in the understanding, and speaks the Spirit's leading of that faculty : holiness reaches to the heart within, and conversation without ; and speaks the Spirit's leading of both, in their utmost comprehensiveness. These he leads and guides unto ; but not in the least to their opposites,—error and sin. Every agent is for that which comports and suits with his own nature, and against that which is contrary thereunto ; therefore, the Spirit being a "Spirit of truth and of holiness," this determines him to lead to these, and to these only. So his conduct is stated in holy writ : "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John xvi. 13.) "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." (Eph. v. 9.) "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (Psalm xxiii. 3.) This holiness includes in it *holy affections, the exercise of the several graces* ; and these the Spirit guides unto : "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. iii. 5.) *The avoiding and mortifying of sin* ; and this the Spirit guides unto : "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.) Immediately it follows, "As many as are led by the Spirit ;" showing that the mortification of sin is one special thing which the Spirit leads to. "Walk in the Spirit," after his guidance, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Gal. v. 16.) "Why?" Because he always makes this the matter of his guidance,—to keep men off from the lust of the flesh, from all sinful ways and courses. He is a "Good" and "Holy Spirit" in himself ; and therefore all his motions tend to what is good and holy. As Satan, (he being the evil spirit,) suitably to his nature, does excite and urge to what is evil ; (Acts v. 3 ; John xiii. 2 ;) so *e contra*, ["on the other hand,"] the Spirit of God (he being the "good Spirit") does excite and urge to what is good, and to nothing else. How do *they* blaspheme this Holy Spirit, *who* do wicked things, and yet presume to say, [that] the Spirit leads them thereunto ! This must be laid down as a principle of undoubted verity, that the sole and whole tendency of the Spirit's leading is to purity, obedience, universal holiness ; and in no case to sin and wickedness.

THE RULE OF IT.

2. *The rule by which he leads.*—And that, in short, is the written word. God guides by the Spirit; the Spirit guides by the word. He is our Guide, and the word is our rule. The Spirit himself, as to his own actings, has no external rule to act by, his internal holiness and perfection being his sole rule. But as to us, in our actings, we have an external rule, by which all that we do is to be squared: and therefore, by and according to this rule, the Spirit guides us; and our conformity thereunto is both the measure, and also the design and end, of the Spirit in his guidance of us.

The word itself carries in it a leading and directive property: “When thou goest, it shall lead thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.” (Prov. vi. 22, 23.) “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm cxix. 105.) “Order my steps in thy word.” (Verse 133.) “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.” (Micah vi. 8.) The written revelation of God’s will is the Christian’s great rule, the compass by which in all things he must steer his course, the star that must direct him in all his motions. It is “to the law and to the testimony,” (Isai. viii. 20,) that we must have our continual recourse for the regulating of us in all matters of faith and practice. Now this leading of the word, and that of the Spirit, are never to be severed: as that is in subordination to this, so this is ever in conjunction with that.

This word we must in all things keep close unto, or else we run ourselves upon most dangerous rocks. The enthusiast is for a light within, for immediate revelations, inspirations, impulses from the Spirit, and I know not what. But are these preter-scriptural? Much more, are they anti-scriptural? O, then, they are nothing but men’s own fancies and delusions, and not at all the leadings of the Spirit of God. When any, upon the pretence of these, go off from the written word, what wild opinions and practices do they run themselves upon! (Of which we have had too many instances both at home and abroad.) The Spirit and the word are our full and complete guide: the Spirit gives light and life to the word; and the word gives evidence that the guidance is from the Spirit.

QUESTION. But it may be asked, “Does the Spirit guide only in this mediate way? Is there not an immediate leading by him? at least, *pro hic et nunc?*”*

ANSWER. No; unless you state it thus:—that, although he may not always, in an express and in an explicit manner, guide *by* the word; yet his guiding always is *according to* the word and consentaneous to it. The word evermore is in the matter, though sometimes it may not be in the manner, of the Spirit’s guidance. He may, without making use of the word, by an immediate divine light and excitation, lead me to this or that duty; but he never leads me to any thing but what the word first makes to be duty. Take it in that other act of the Spirit which follows here: “The Spirit itself beareth

* “On emergent occasions.”—EDIT.

witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 16.) This "witnessing" of adoption is usually *mediate, and by the word*: yet it is not always so; sometimes it is *immediate, and without the word*. That is, the Spirit assures of this, not only in a syllogistical way, by such and such scripture-signs, marks, qualifications, dispositions, which evidence sonship to God; (as, "He that is led by the Spirit, is the son of God: Thou art one who art led by the Spirit: Therefore thou art the son of God;") but he sometimes may, and does, directly and immediately say to a person, "Thou art a child of God." But now, though here he thus witnesses abstractly and precisely, without making use of the marks and signs of the word concerning this relation; yet he never so witnesses but according to the word; that is, where those marks and signs are. In like manner it is as to his leading. This is not always managed by an express revival upon the heart of this or that passage in the word; yet, for the matter of it, it is ever done in a way consonant and agreeable to the word.

And so long as we keep to this, I think there will be no great danger of enthusiasm or fanaticism, rightly so called.

THE MANNER OF IT.

3. *The manner of the Spirit's leading.*—Concerning which, (not to run out into all the various explications that occur about it,) I will confine myself to these two things:—the Spirit leads,

(1.) *With power and efficacy.*

(2.) *With sweetness and gentleness.* Fortiter et suaviter.

(1.) *With power and efficacy.*—The Spirit leads so, as that the person led shall certainly follow him. For, in this act, he does not only illuminate the understanding, or barely dictate to the mind and conscience what way is to be taken; but he does also inwardly, by a secret power upon the heart, incline and bend the will to close with what he directs unto. He leads with a strong hand, so as that the soul shall not be able to resist him; I mean, *ad victoriam*.* I speak not of his guidance which is common and general, but of that which is peculiar and saving; of that which is put forth either in those that are regenerate already, or in those whom God designs to make such. This leading of the Spirit, in such persons, is ever carried on with power and efficacy. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) Here is not only an informing light, but an overpowering influence: "I will *cause you* to walk in my statutes." "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." (Jer. xxxi. 18.) It is "leading" in the text,—to show the mildness of the Spirit's operation; elsewhere it is "drawing,"—to show the power of the Spirit's operation. It is "drawing," as to the depraved will; it is "leading," as to the sanctified will. The evil spirit leads to sin. "How?" Why, he moves, persuades, solicits to sin; and further than that he cannot go. But the Holy Spirit, in his leading to grace

* "So as to overcome him."—EDIT.

and holiness, pursues this with a determining and overcoming power ; so as that the effect which he aims at shall certainly be produced. This we must grant ; or else we must hold a parity of operation betwixt the two spirits,—that the Holy Spirit has but the same causal influx upon what is good, which the wicked spirit has upon what is evil ; than which nothing can be more absurd !

(2.) Yet it is power acted and exerted *with all sweetness, mildness, and gentleness*.—Here is “leading, but no force ; conduct, but no compulsion, no coercion ;” *vehemens inclinatio, non coactio* :* the will is determined, but so as that not the least violence is done to it, to the infringing of its liberty.† How spontaneously does the person led follow him that leads him ! So it is here. This and all the other workings of the Spirit are admirably suited to the nature of reasonable and free agents. Efficacious grace does not at all destroy natural liberty. Where the Spirit does not find sinners willing, by his sweet methods he makes them willing : “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” (Psalm cx. 3.) ● A “day of power ;” yet “willing.” Even the Spirit’s drawing is managed with all consistency to the freedom of the will. ‘*Ἐλκυει ὁ Θεος, ἀλλὰ βουλομενον ἔλκυει*. † “He draws, but it is one that he makes willing to follow.” “Behold, I will allure her :” (Hosea ii. 14 :) ay, there is the Spirit’s leading ! This being the constant and avowed doctrine of the Protestants, and particularly their explication of the Spirit’s leading in the text ; § how injurious and invidious are the Popish writers, in their traducing and calumniating of them, as if they asserted the Spirit, in this or any other act, to work with compulsion, or in a way destructive to man’s essential liberty ! It is a vile scandal ! And yet how do Estius, Salmeron, Contzen, (upon the words,) charge our divines with it ! We perfectly concur with blessed St. Austin, || in that excellent passage of his cited by the Rhemists : “*As many as are led by the Spirit—He meaneth not,*” says he, “that the children of God are violently compelled against their wills ; but that they be sweetly drawn, moved, or induced to do good.” But no more of this.

THE EXTENT OF IT.

4. *The extent of this leading of the Spirit.*—A threefold account may be given of that.

(1.) *In regard of the subject or person led.*—So it extends to the whole man : first to the interior acts of the soul in its several faculties,—understanding, will, and affections ; and then to the exterior acts of the body ; yea, to the whole conversation : for all these are

* GORRANUS. † *Ne arbitreris istam asperam molestamque violentiam : dulcis est, suavis est ; ipsa suavitas te trahit.*—AUGUSTINUS. “Do not suppose it to be a harsh and forcible violence : it is pleasant, it is sweet ; nay, sweetness itself draws thee along.”—EDIT. † CHRYSOSTOMUS. § *Ductus Spiritus non est impulsus violentus, quo rapimur inviti ut stipites ; sed est efficax persuasio, quæ ex nolentibus efficitur volentes.*—PAREUS, with many others. “The leading of the Spirit is not a violent impulse, by which we are hurried along unwillingly like senseless blocks ; but it is an efficacious persuasion, by which, from being reluctant, we are rendered willing.”—EDIT. || *Enchiridion*, cap. 64. *De Verbis Apostol.*, Serm. xiii. cap. 11, 12.

comprehended within, and fall under, the Spirit's leading. For, as his sanctifying operation extends to all of these:—"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (1 Thess. v. 23:)—so does his guiding operation also; these two being commensurate and co-extensive. This might be made out in particulars, was I not afraid of too much prolixity.

(2.) *In regard of the object or matter that the Spirit leads unto.*—So it extends to the whole duty of a Christian; to all that he is to know, believe, and do. Look: as the word, in its *external* leading, guides us in all things that concern faith and practice, it being a complete and perfect rule; (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17;) so it is with the Spirit in his *internal* leading, too. For knowledge and faith, the promise is: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv. 26.) And again: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John xvi. 13; see 1 John ii. 20—27.) And so it is as to holiness, also: this Spirit directs those who have him to and in the practice of holiness, in its full and utmost extent and latitude. As "the grace of God," the gospel *without*, "teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" (Titus ii. 11, 12;) which is the sum of all duty toward God, toward men, and toward ourselves: so the Spirit *within* teaches, guides, inclines to all these. His gracious conduct is not confined to, does not terminate in, this or that particular duty of religion: no; but it extends to every duty, to the whole obedience of a Christian.

(3.) *In regard of the degree and measure of it.*—Concerning which it is clear, that this leading of the Spirit, in the directing, inclining, governing motions of it, is not, as to degree, equal in all God's children. All have the thing in the necessary and substantial part of it, yet so as that there is a gradual difference in their having of it; some having more, and some less. He, being a free and arbitrary agent, does proportion this act of his grace to different persons as he pleases. And he making *some* more ductile to his leadings than others, accordingly he vouchsafes more of them to *those*, than he does to others. But in none does it reach so high as to render them perfect here. For, although we should grant, (which I do not,) that the Spirit should advance his guidance (considered in itself, and as it comes from him) to such a degree and pitch, as to lay the foundation of perfection in saints here below; yet considering what the capacity of the subjects of this act is here, (they being flesh as well as spirit,) it is not imaginable that, *de facto* and *in eventu*,* they should ever here be perfect upon it. Wherefore it must be bounded and limited, though not from what the Spirit *could* do, yet from what he is *pleased* to do in believers in their present imperfect state. "He will guide you into *all* truth." (John xvi. 13.) "What! so as to make saints

* "Actually and in the issue."—EDIT.

omniscient or infallible?" He guides unto *all* holiness. "What! so as to render them sinless and impeccable here on earth?" We must by no means carry it thus high. It, therefore, must be qualified thus: "He will guide you into all truth;" that is, into the knowledge of all necessary and fundamental truths: "and he shall guide you into all holiness;" that is, so far as your present state admits of, and so far as is necessary for your future glory. Beyond this measure, we must not extend or heighten the Spirit's leading. For the truth is, —if we take it in this bounded notion, we secure the thing; but if we go higher, we totally undermine and nullify it; as all experience proves.

And by the way observe, that this guidance of the Spirit in the *general*, and that guidance of his in *particular* in the duty of prayer, do much stand upon the same level. Insomuch that as the former (the Spirit's immediate guiding of believers in the matter and manner of their actions) does not thereupon render them or their actions perfectly holy and free from all mixtures of sin, so neither does the latter (the Spirit's immediate guidance and assistance in the matter and manner of prayer) render the prayers of such infallible, or of equal authority with the scriptures, as some object. Because, as to both, this agency of the Spirit is to be limited; partly from the consideration of the present state of the subject in whom it is exerted, and partly from the Spirit's aim and end therein. It is true, (to obviate a bad inference that may be drawn from hence,) the apostles themselves, considered as but men and as men in the state of imperfection, —so, they were fallible as we are. But as they had, in matters of faith and doctrine, for a special end, that extraordinary guidance and direction from the Spirit which no common believers now have; so they, and they only, became infallible. Wherefore, although saints now are partakers of a special assistance and guidance from the Spirit in prayer and in their general course of life, *quoad veritatem rei*; * yet this does not make them infallible in the one, or impeccable in the other; it being vouchsafed to them but in such a degree as is consistent with their present state, and subservient to the end of the Spirit in his present operations in them; which is but to guide them to necessary truth and holiness, to help them in their infirmities, and the like; but not to advance them to apostolical endowments; of which now, the evangelical doctrine being published and sealed, there is no necessity.

II. And thus I have gone over the doctrinal explication of the leading of the Spirit. I come now to *resolve some practical inquiries about it*, which will be instead of the application.

INQUIRY I.

The first is this: *How may we, as to ourselves or others, know, whether we or they be led by the Spirit of God?*

It highly concerns us to be very inquisitive about this; both because our sonship to God must be evidenced by it, (for the text is

* "As it regards the truth of the thing."—EDIT.

express: "As many as," and no more than, "are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,") and also because there are great mistakes in men about this. The most lay claim to it, when yet, God knows, but very few partake of it in truth and reality. How many please themselves with the thoughts of their being "led by the Spirit," when it is most obvious they are not!

"Every man in the world is acted by some spirit or other." * Now, there being different and contrary spirits, some evil and some good, the question is, "What that is which we are led and acted by."

There is "the spirit of the world," (1 Cor. ii. 12,) by which the men of the world are "led." There is the corrupt and sinful spirit: "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (James iv. 5.) By this all in the unregenerate state are "led." There is "the spirit of whoredom," (Hosea iv. 12,) the "spirit of perverseness," (Isai. xix. 14,) the spirit of seduction, (1 Tim. iv. 1,) under the conduct of which too many are. These are the evil spirits *within* us, which influence men in their actings. And then there is the grand evil spirit *without*,—the devil; "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2.) And O, what a heart-piercing, soul-afflicting thing is it to consider, how the generality of men are led by this wicked spirit! All these spirits are *evil*.

In opposition to which, there are other spirits that are *good*. And they are either the *renewed* spirit in God's people, the heart as sanctified, as having a vital, supernatural principle infused into it, which leads and inclines to holiness; or the *renewing* Spirit, God's own Spirit, of whom the text speaks.

These spirits are contrary to the former, both in themselves and also in their leadings. For as *they* are all for what is evil, so *these* are all for what is good. And the contrariety is such betwixt them, as that they are *αυστάτα*, "incompatible" in the same subject, in their full, entire power and strength. So as that a person can be led but by one of them; both cannot lead together; I mean, as to a man's general course, and as to their absolute power and dominion in him.

The text speaking of the leading of God's Spirit, the inquiry must be confined to that: and so it is laid down: *How may we know whether we be led by the Spirit of God?*

For the RESOLUTION of which, I must refer you to what I have been upon. Having said so much in the opening of the thing itself, by the comparing of yourselves with that you will be able to determine your own case,—whether it belong to you or not. It would be superfluous for me to enlarge again upon those heads in the application, which I have already been so large upon in the explication. Only, therefore, (to give some brief direction,) I would desire you to *look back*,

1. *To the essential and constitutive acts included in the Holy*

* *Omnes homines aguntur aliquo spiritu.*—ORIGENES.

Spirit's leading; namely, guidance, inclination of the heart to good, corroboration, gubernation.—Art thou one that art guided by this Spirit to and in the great duties of Christianity? one who art strongly inclined to what is good? one that feelest an inward divine strengthening for doing and suffering? one that art ruled and governed by this Spirit? Surely, thou art “led” by him! But if it be otherwise, thou art led not by this, but by some other, spirit.

2. *To the matter or terminus of the Spirit's leading,—truth and holiness.*—Do thy opinions carry truth in them? thy practices, holiness? O, then thou art “led by the Spirit.” But what shall we say to those who are “led away with,” *συναπαχθεντες*, “the error of the wicked,” (2 Peter iii. 17,) or “led away,” *αγομενα*, “with divers lusts?” (2 Tim. iii. 6.) Why, it is a concluded case,—these are not “led by the Spirit.” The course discovers the guide: the fruits of the Spirit ever accompany the leading of the Spirit. *Principiata respondent suis principiis.** If the action be holy, spiritual, and good, such as suits with the Holy Spirit, it then proceeds from him: but if it be sinful and wicked, Satan and thy own evil heart are thy leaders in it and to it. “Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God,” (1 John iii. 10,) nor “led by his Spirit.” What! live in drunkenness, uncleanness, sensuality, injustice, malice, hatred? and yet pretend to the conduct of the good Spirit? What a delusion is this to thyself! what a reproach and injury to the blessed Spirit!

3. *To the rule by which the Spirit leads,—the written word of God.*—He indited this word, and he guides by it. The Spirit and the word go hand-in-hand together. Is your faith regulated by this? [Are] your conversations steered by this? Hereby you may know, that the Spirit leads you. But if any believe, live, “speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isai. viii. 20.) “He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” (1 John iv. 6.) O, let all take heed of fathering any thing upon the Holy Spirit, which does not comport with, nor is founded upon, the holy scriptures! The enthusiast is very bold with the Spirit; but his arrogance and folly shall be made manifest at one time or another.

4. *To the manner of the Spirit's leading: he leads with power and efficacy.*—Well, what do you find of this? What have you more than a bare directive light? Is there a “power working in” you, (Eph. iii. 20,) effectually to incline and draw you to what is good? to beat down and subdue the innate renitency and reluctancy of the will? O, here is the leading of the Spirit! To find out which, two things must be searched into:—

(1.) *Whether it be the Spirit of God that leads us.*

(2.) *Whether he leads us in a peculiar and saving, or only in a common and general, way.* Now the first must be found out by the foregoing heads; the last, by that head which I am now upon. If

* “Actions answer to their principles.”—EDIT.

the Spirit work in me as a Spirit of power, as well as of light and direction, I may conclude I am "led by" him.

I beseech you, lay these trials and your hearts close together; and the decision then will be easy and safe. And pray consider,—as the Spirit's leading must evidence your divine sonship, so the things set before you must evidence the reality of that divine leading.

INQUIRY II.

A second inquiry is, *What inducements are there to excite and move men to endeavour to attain and live under this leading of God's Spirit?*

ANSWER. Many and great. O, how strong are the motives that are proper for the urging of this!

1. As, First, *The excellency of the thing.*—*The Person leading*,—he is excellent; the great Spirit of God: *the act*,—divine and supernatural leading,—that is excellent: *the object* which this tends unto and terminates in,—that is excellent; as the loving of God, delighting in God, conformity to God. All carry a transcendent glory and excellency in them. O, did but sinners know what this *ἡγεμονία*, this "conduct and guidance," of the Spirit is, what a blessed thing it is to possess and feel it; how earnest would they be in their desires and pursuits after it! I am sure, the saints that have it would not be without it (no, not one day) for millions of worlds.

2. *The necessity of it.*—The leading of the Spirit,—O, how highly necessary is it! Who can be without it? What becomes of the poor blind man that has none to guide him? of the weak child that has none to uphold it? Alas! the poor sinner, in both respects, does more need the Spirit's leading inwardly, than either of these need external leading. Such is our spiritual blindness,—our aptness to wander, our ignorance of our way, our liability to fall into [down] precipices, and the like,—as that, without a divine hand to guide us, we are lost. And such, too, is our spiritual debility and weakness, as that, if the Spirit of God do not hold us up in our going, "taking us by our arms," (Hosea xi. 3,) we fall immediately. How absolutely necessary, therefore, is the Spirit's leading, both for direction and also for sustentation! It is true, God has planted in man a natural faculty, to guide and direct him in his actings; *το ἡγεμονικόν*, the understanding, reason, conscience, to be his "director" and monitor as to what he is to do: and this, in things of a mere natural and moral consideration, may be of great use to him: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." (Prov. xx. 27.) Ah! but as to things of a spiritual consideration, the matters of evangelical faith and practice, he must have a higher guide and leader, even the Holy Ghost; or else in these things he will be at an utter loss: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. x. 23.) "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." (Prov. xvi. 9.) The natural light, separate from what is supernatural, is a very incompetent and insufficient guide; which evinces the necessity of the Spirit's guidance.

3. *As the natural guide is defective and insufficient, so there are other guides which are destructive and damnable.*—Such as Satan, depraved nature, indwelling sin, the flesh, the world. O, what dangerous guides are these! If they be our leaders, whither will they lead us? Why, first to sin and wickedness here, and then to hell hereafter. It is with them as with Solomon's whore: "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." (Prov. vii. 27.) Can the course be good, when the guide is bad? and can the end be good, when the course is bad? Neither can be expected. The conversation *naturally* comports with the leader; and the end *judicially* comports with the conversation: so that, if these lead you, this will inevitably follow upon it,—you will be very wicked in this life, and very miserable in the life to come.

And beside this, pray consider what a base thing it is for such a creature as man to be under the conduct and government of such base things as these! O what a debasement is it, to him who is of such a divine extract and original, to be at the beck and ordering of such vile things as Satan, sin, and the rest! Yet this is the misery of the fallen state: upon Adam's fall, man has sadly lost his way, and has put himself under woful guides; and one great thing done in his restoration to his primitive state, is to reduce him to God as his first and best Guide and Leader.

To drive this a little further: in a word, know that where it is not the leading of the good Spirit, it is the leading of the evil spirit. For one of these it must be; not a man in the world but he is led by one of them. Now, do you not dread the thoughts of being led by Satan? O, it will be so, unless you be led by this Holy Spirit of God. What! the devil thy leader? O dreadful! What comes after a devil-leading, but a devil-tormenting?

4. *Weigh the way and manner of the Spirit's leading.*—You see how the conduct of the opposite leaders is stated: well, how does this Leader manage his conduct? *With great exactness and wisdom*: he so leads, as never to mislead; so, as always to direct with the deepest judgment. For, as in all his other acts, so in this, he is "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of knowledge." (Isai. xi. 2.) "I will instruct thee," says God, "and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye;" (Psalm xxxii. 8;) that is, with great care and accuracy. Thus the Spirit leads. And he does this *with infinite truth and faithfulness* also. As the wise man, personating his father, says, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom: I have led thee in right paths;" (Prov. iv. 11;) and as Abraham's servant, in the particular case before him: "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, which hath led me in the right way;" (Gen. xxiv. 27, 48;) and as the Psalmist, with respect to God's conduct of Israel in the wilderness: "He led them forth by the right way;" (Psalm cvii. 7;) such a leading is this of the Spirit as to believers in their whole course; he always leads them "in the right way." And then, he leads *safely*, in reference both to the way and to the end: "He led them on safely."

(Psalm lxxviii. 53.) I do but allude to it. Here is no such leader as those [whom] the prophet speaks of: "The leaders of this people cause them to err: and they that are led of them are destroyed." (Isai. ix. 16.) O, who, then, would not be desirous to be "led by" him? The skilfullest, faithfullest, safest guide, the traveller pitches upon: O Christian, wilt not thou do the same for thy precious and immortal soul?

5. *The advantages, benefits, blessings, that attend and result from this leading of the Spirit, are great and glorious.*—As, (to instance in a few,) *inward peace and comfort*: wherever the Spirit is a leading Spirit, there he is, or will be, a comforting Spirit. *A readiness to all duties of holiness*: so as to do them spontaneously and with delight: "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" (Gal. v. 18;) that is, so as in your obedience to act from a servile spirit, and from the mere external compulsions of the law: but, having the gracious conduct of the Spirit, this will make you do all freely, with the greatest promptitude and alacrity. *Sonship to God*: so it here comes in: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." As it leads to conversion, *it makes us* the sons of God; as it leads after conversion, *it evidences us to be* the sons of God; as has been already said. If the Spirit be thy Leader, God is thy Father: and what a privilege is this! (John i. 12; 1 John iii. 1.) And then, as the consummation of all, comes *the glory and blessedness of heaven*, as the certain portion of such who are "led by the Spirit." Death and hell are not more sure upon the leading of sin and Satan, than life and heaven are sure upon the leading of this Spirit. God ever saves in heaven such whom he leads on earth: "As many as walk according to this rule, mercy and peace be upon them." (Gal. vi. 16.) "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm lxxiii. 24.)

All being put together and seriously weighed, have I not said enough and enough to excite you all to attain and close with this blessed leading of the Spirit of God? Much more might have been added by way of motive; but if what has been said will not prevail, I despair of ever prevailing with you.

INQUIRY III.

A third inquiry follows: *How may this leading of the Spirit be attained? What is to be done by us, that we may be thus led by Him?*

ANSWER. In order to this, take the following DIRECTIONS:—

1. *There must be the having of the Spirit, before there can be the leading of the Spirit.*—This order is founded in the nature of the thing. We cannot expect to participate of the Spirit's operations, (such as are saving,) before we participate of the Spirit himself. Therefore, pray attend upon the gospel, by which he is conveyed to sinners; and then, when you have once received him, he will "not be idle and ineffective, but an operative and leading Spirit in you." *

* *Non est Spiritus Sanctus otiosus; movet mentes et ducit.*—MELANCHTHON.

2. *The antecedent, first leading of the Spirit must be had, before there can be the having of his subsequent and secondary leading.*—That is to say, he must first lead you to God by conversion; first bring you into a state of grace: and then way is made for his subsequent leading and direction. When he has been a quickening Spirit in the infusing of a vital principle into the soul, then succeeds this act which I am upon. And not till then; for who will attempt to lead a thing that is dead? This method of the Spirit, therefore, must be regarded and complied with. It is first sanctification; then manuduction, in the several things contained therein.

3. *Be willing to follow the leading, the motions of the Spirit.*—He gives again and again his secret guidance to you; showing what you are to do, what not. If this be followed and complied with, he will continue it; if not, he will withdraw, and leave you to follow the conduct of your own inclinations; a sore judgment! “My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” (Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12.) O dreadful word! The same will the Spirit do, upon our rejecting or resisting of his leading. He may long strive, but he will “not always strive.” (Gen. vi. 3.) If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more. His initial workings in this are to be closed with, or he goes no further. That one act in the leading of the Spirit, namely, his powerful inclining of the heart to comply with what he leads unto, secures all the rest. If thou art an opposer of the Spirit, he will not be thy guide: yield to him, and close with him, and he will not withhold this grace from thee.

4. *Let your dependence be upon God and his Spirit for guidance and direction.*—Would you have him to lead you? O, let your trust and reliance be upon him; and see that you renounce all confidences in yourselves. He that thinks he has wisdom or grace enough in himself to “order his conversation aright,” shall never find the Spirit to be a guide to him. “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.” (Psalm xxv. 9.) When a man is brought to this meek, humble frame, then he is in the way of the Spirit’s leading: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thy own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Prov. iii. 5, 6.) Christian prudence, caution, and circumspection, is our duty; but do we lay the stress of our confidence upon that? “The steps of our strength shall be straitened, and our own counsel shall cast us down;” as he speaks, Job xviii. 7. “Man’s goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?” (Prov. xx. 24.) So long as thou thinkest [that] thou canst go by thyself, the Spirit will not take thee by the hand to lead thee.

5. *Pray much for this grace of the Spirit.*—It being a free and

arbitrary act on his part, he will be sought-to for it, and give it forth in that way which best suits with his sovereignty. How much was David in prayer to God for this! "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me." (Psalm xxv. 5.) "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness; make thy way straight before my face." (Psalm v. 8.) "For thy name's sake lead me, and guide me." (Psalm xxxi. 3.) "Lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm cxxxix. 24.) "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalm cxliii. 10.) O, what a desirable mercy is this leading mercy! And, sirs, will you not pray, and pray fervently, for it? Yea, will you not every day make this your request?—"Blessed God and Spirit, let me be led by thee this day." First he works as a Spirit of prayer, in the drawing forth of the soul's desires after this mercy; and then as a guiding and leading Spirit. And the former is a good plea for the latter: "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee." (Psalm cxliii. 8.) O that we might all follow these directions; and then we should have, not the thing only, but a large measure thereof!

INQUIRY IV.

It may in the fourth place be queried, *What duties are incumbent upon those who are led by the Spirit?*

ANSWER. Such as these:—

1. *They should more and more follow the leadings of the Spirit.*—I hope I speak to some of you who have these, and live daily under them. If so, what is your duty? Why, in a higher degree to obey and fall in with them. The following of them, as that is simply and absolutely considered, is to be supposed and granted from your being "led by the Spirit;" for the former is necessarily included in the latter. And therefore, it is not this, as considered in itself, that I am so much to press upon you, as the manner, degree, and measure of it. And, in this respect, the best stand in need of counsel and quickening; for who do so follow the Spirit's leading as they ought? We have an excellent Guide; one that leads us with infinite wisdom and faithfulness; that directs us to nothing but what is good, and good *for us*. Ah! but here is our sin and misery,—we do not carry ourselves as we ought, in such an obeying and following of his conduct as that requires.

As to this, therefore, I would excite you to follow the Spirit's leading thus:—

(1.) *More exactly.*—So as to act just as he would have you act, to move just as he would have you move, to keep pace with him step by step in all his holy motions. What Israel did to the cloud,—“At the commandment of the Lord they journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. And when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed,” (Num. ix. 18, 21.)—that we should do to the Holy Spirit, in the exact ordering of

all our motions by and according to his guidance. This should be the aim and endeavour of every one of us, though, through weakness and infirmity, we cannot actually and universally come up to it.

(2.) Follow the Spirit *more fully*.—God gives this high character of Caleb, that he “followed him fully.” (Num. xiv. 24.) Art thou one that art “led by the Spirit?” O follow him fully! Whatever truth he would have you believe, let it be believed; whatever duty he would have you practise, let it be practised; whatsoever sin he would have you mortify, let it be mortified. As the scribe said to Christ, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;” (Matt. viii. 19;) so do you say to the Spirit, “I will follow thee whithersoever thou leadest me. Excite me to good,—I will do it; restrain me from evil,—I will shun it.” Blessed are they who thus follow this Leader!

(3.) Do this *more uniformly and constantly*.—In being more even, fixed, and steady, in holy walking.

(4.) *More readily and freely*.—O, there should be no demurring, disputing, consulting with flesh and blood, hanging back, in the case; but a willing, ready, cheerful compliance with whatever the Spirit leads us unto! How well does this comport, as with the nature and essence, so with the matter and manner, of his leading!

(5.) Follow him *so as to make further progress in the way wherein he guides you*.—So as continually to be getting nearer and nearer to the end of your journey.

(6.) And, lastly: Follow him *with stronger resolution and purpose of heart*.—Whatever difficulties, discouragements, dangers, you meet with, yet resolve that nothing shall make you leave your Guide, or the holy course that he has led you to. And thus I would persuade you to rise higher and higher in your following of the Spirit.

2. *Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you*.—You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How does he wander and bewilder himself, when the Spirit does not guide him! How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! how unable to go, when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's leading! Take a good man without this, and he is like a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a poor child that has none to sustain it, the rude multitude that have none to keep them in any order. What a sad difference is there in the same person, as to what he is when the Spirit *leads* him, and as to what he is when the Spirit *leaves* him! O, therefore, let us always keep him with us! I may allude to that passage of Moses to Hobab: “And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.” (Num. x. 31.) So let none of us

let the Spirit depart, or occasion his leaving of us ; for, in the wilderness he will be as "eyes to us," to direct and show us our way. How dismal would the state of the Israelites in the wilderness have been, if there they had not had the cloud to guide them ! So it is in the thing before us.

OBJECTION. "But does the Spirit at any time do this to God's people ? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it ?"

ANSWER. Yes ; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him ; and when he is grieved, he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally, yet for a time and in such a degree. As a guide, that is to conduct the traveller ; if this traveller shall refuse to follow him, or shall give unkind usage to him, what does the guide then do ? Why, he recedes, and leaves him to shift for himself. It is thus in the case in hand : if we comply with the Spirit in his motions, and use him tenderly, he will hold on in his leading of us ; but if otherwise, he will concern himself no more about us. O, take heed how you carry yourselves toward him ; not only upon ingenuousness, it is base to be unkind to our Guide, ("Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way ?" Jer. ii. 17.) but also upon the account of self-love : for "as we behave ourselves to him, so he will behave himself to us :"
Ita nos tractat, ut a nobis tractatur.

3. *Labour after the having of the leading of the Spirit in a higher degree and measure, than what as yet you have attained unto.*—It is not enough merely to keep it, but there must be a getting more of it. As there should be a rise in our following, so we should press after a rise in the Spirit's leading of us. And that in a threefold respect :—that he lead us,

(1.) *More extensively, as to the object ;*

(2.) *With greater light and clearness, power and efficacy, as to the manner ;*

(3.) *With more evenness and constancy, as to the duration and continuance of it.* He guides you to truth ; but does he guide you to *all* truth ? He guides you *unto* truth ; but does he guide you *into* truth ? and is this his constant and continued working in you ? O, this high measure of it we should aspire at and pant after, taking up with nothing short of it ! And so, as to holiness and practical godliness, the same is to be endeavoured after. There is indeed much mercy in the lowest degree of this act, and they that have the least should be thankful ; but yet a fuller proportion may and ought to be desired by every child of God. And surely, they who experience what this leading of the Spirit is, never think they have enough of it.

4. *So live, as that it may appear to others that you are led by this Spirit.*—Christians, your actions and conversations should be such as may suit with the Spirit that leads you ; such as may evidence to the world, that you are not in pretence only, but in truth and reality, under a divine and supernatural conduct. Do we lay claim to this ?

O, then, what good do we do more, what evil less, than others do? What! live in sin? do evil things? be proud, worldly, covetous, passionate, unclean, malicious, fraudulent? and yet pretend you are "led by the Holy Spirit?" Lord, what an indignity and affront do you put upon him! what a cheat and fallacy upon your own souls! Pray never talk of this, unless your lives be holy and good. For ye who are real saints, O, that you would oft think of this, and look upon it as one of the highest engagements to circumspect walking! You that are guided by such a word without and such a Spirit within, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" (2 Peter iii. 11.)

5. *Be very thankful for this glorious mercy.*—"Led by the Spirit?" Admirable love! What thankfulness is due to Father, Son, and Spirit for it! for all these have a hand, though the last be more immediately concerned, in it. When you know not your way, this Spirit shows it to you; when you are weak and feeble, not able to go, this Spirit strengthens you: "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." (Hosea xi. 3.) When others are left to the conduct of their own light, understanding, inclinations, which lead them to sin and death; you are under the conduct of this gracious Spirit, who leads you to grace and glory. What cause have you to admire this distinguishing grace! How great is the *Father's* love in this! who, as fathers here, when they send their sons into foreign countries, and they themselves cannot be with them,—they send a tutor or governor with them in all their travels to instruct and govern and take care of them; just so does your Heavenly Father do for you, in and by his Spirit, in this state of your pilgrimage and absence from him. How great is the love of the *Son* in this! for he has purchased, and now does actually send, this Spirit to be your Teacher, Monitor, and Guide. And how great is the love of the *Spirit*, too, in this! All his operations carry infinite goodness and condescension in them; but none more than this,—his tender and patient guiding of us. Should not all the Persons, therefore, be heartily, sincerely, and with the greatest enlargedness of heart, blessed and adored for it? especially considering how they design and aim at the exalting of themselves by this very act. As in the miraculous leading of the people of Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and so on,—set forth, Isai. lxiii. 12—14: "That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name; that led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people:" for what end? "To make thyself a glorious name,"—surely so in that spiritual and gracious leading that I am treating of, the great God, whether essentially or personally considered, designs much glory and adoration to himself. And let him have it, (for he well deserves it,) from all that have any experience of this grace.

INQUIRY V.

A fifth inquiry : *May such who are led by the Spirit fetch comfort from it ? Is this a solid bottom for any to build holy joy upon ?*

ANSWER. Undoubtedly it is ! You who have it, may rejoice, and that greatly : for,

1. *It is a clear evidence, a deciding argument, of your being the sons of God.*—And what a soul-rejoicing privilege is that ! “Sons of God ?” this assures of dear affection, tender care, strong protection, constant provision, free access to God, ready audience of prayer, a gracious presence in every condition, a favourable acceptance of all duties, a good inheritance and portion ; and what not ? All these blessings are yours, if ye be “the sons of God ;” and so you are, if “led by the Spirit.” O, then, what a ground of comfort is this !

2. As it is a certain evidence of sonship here, so *it is a certain pledge of heaven and salvation hereafter.*—And that, both upon the account of the relation which it instates in,—“For if sons, then heirs ; heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ,” (Rom. viii. 17.)—and also upon the account of the leading itself. For wherever that is, as it is in order to salvation, so this salvation by it shall certainly be obtained. Never did any perish that lived under the Spirit's guidance and conduct. God ever saves, where the Spirit leads. All that he guides, come safe to the end of their journey, to their eternal rest.

3. Beside the things which are wrapped up in this leading, beside the matter and manner of it, (all of which carry in them ground of the highest joy,) consider but two things further about it :—

(1.) *That it is abiding, permanent, continuing.*—The Spirit does not lead, and then leave : (as some guides do with poor travellers, deserting them in the midst of their dangers :) no ; but he holds on, repeats and lengthens out this act to the very last. True, this depends upon conditions on our part, as ye have heard : but yet these do not make the thing uncertain and liable to intercision ; because it is part of the Spirit's leading, to direct, incline, and overpower to the performance of those conditions. So it is secured, as to the continuance of it, to all the elect of God, Every upright Christian may triumphantly say, with David, “This God is our God for ever and ever : he will be our Guide even unto death.” (Psalm xlviii. 14.) The cloud never left Israel, till it brought them to the Land of Promise : so it is here.

(2.) *That it is managed and carried on, all along, with mixtures of all other graces.*—That is, with the bestowing of inward peace and comfort, and of all supplies necessary to the believing soul. It is not a bare, naked leading ; but such as is attended with the conveyance of all other mercies. According to that encouraging text, Isai. xlix. 10 : “He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.” Is not here *ισχυρα παρακλησις*, “strong consolation,” (Heb. vi. 18,) for all who are led by God's Spirit ?

INQUIRY VI.

In the sixth and last place, it might be inquired: *Since this leading of the Holy Spirit is a special and discriminating act, what inferences may be drawn from it as being such?*

ANSWER. I might instance in several, if I had not already exceeded the bounds of a sermon. Therefore, take but this one: *That it is not a thing much to be wondered at, that saints and sinners do so much differ, and that saints and sinners do so little differ.*

The difference betwixt the two former is great; light and darkness, heaven and hell, do not more differ than they. That which the one loves, the other hates. In their visible practices, there is little but sin in the one; there is holiness, though imperfect, in the other. The one curses, swears, takes God's name in vain, lives a brutish life, minds not God; the other fears God, avoids evil, desires to order words, thoughts, actions, by the rule of the word, prays, sanctifies the sabbath, does good: is not here a vast difference? There is, indeed! But can it be expected it should be otherwise, they being led by different and contrary spirits? O, upon this, no wonder that their actings and courses are so different! Men will and must be and do according to the spirit which guides and governs them: therefore, the unregenerate and wicked being under the guidance and power of the evil spirit, they will do what suits with that spirit; *e contra*, ["on the opposite,"] the renewed and sanctified being under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, they will do what suits with that Spirit. And upon this foundation there must be an everlasting difference and contrariety betwixt them.

But then, for saints and saints,—they do not thus differ. As to lesser matters, there may be too much of differences even amongst them; but as to the fundamentals of faith and practice, so there is an admirable harmony, unity, and consent amongst them. Some live in one age, some in another; some in one place, some in another: yet there is a blessed oneness and agreement amongst them all. They believe the same truths, perform the same duties, attend upon the same worship, walk in the same path of holiness, have and act the same graces, groan under the same burdens, drive-on the same designs: as face answers to face, so do they to one another. "And whence is this?" Why, from this:—they are all "led by" one and the same Spirit. Hence it is that they do so concur in all the necessary and vital parts of religion: "We having the same Spirit of faith." (2 Cor. iv. 13.) "There is one body, and one Spirit," (Eph. iv. 4,) which actuates and animates all that body. It is "one and the self-same Spirit which worketh in all;" as the apostle speaks in reference to gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 11. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God:" here are "many" that are "led," but it is but one "Spirit" that leads them all. This is that which causes such an unanimity and harmony in God's people, both in matters of faith and practice. O that the world might see more of the thing! and then the reason thereof would be obvious.