

SERMON I.*

John iii. 6 latter part.

That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.

THE apostle represents the different states of men, according to the different temper of their minds, as they are either carnal or spiritual; the misery and deadliness of the former; that "to be carnally minded is death:" the life and peace which is involved in the other; that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. 8. 6. We are presented in this text with a view of the two great fountains of that carnality and spirituality, which are themselves so great fountains of evil and good, unto the children of men, according as the one or the other hath place in them. The whole verse presents us with a view of both; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit": though I am to insist, as my design requires, only upon the latter. Some perhaps, taking some notice, that there is a universal death reigning over this world, by reason of that carnality which hath spread itself through it; may be prone to inquire, From whence is it, that so prevailing a carnality should so mortally have tainted the spirits of men every where? And this our Lord gives no other account of, and only resolves the matter, into ordinary human propagation; "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh." His account is not such as seems to aim at gratifying the curious, but such as wherein the sounder minded might very well be expected to acquiesce. It being taken for granted, that the higher original of human nature, was very well understood and known; it might seem a sufficient account of the original of that corruption, which is now connate with the nature of man; that from apostate creatures, such as were like themselves have descended, and what is born of the flesh, is nothing else

* Preached November 25th, 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

be by begetting, or being born : for so it is indifferently rendered.

I. We are to consider the product or the effect wrought, and that is defined by the name spirit ; what is born or begotten of the Spirit, is spirit. It is needful to give some account here what we are not to understand by it, and then what we are.

1. It is very manifest we are not to understand by it the natural spirit of a man ; for our Saviour is not speaking here of bringing men into the world, but bringing them into the church : He is not speaking of such a sort of begetting whereby men are produced, but christians. Nor is it a distinct substance from that, or another substance diverse from the spirit of a man ; for then a regenerate person, and an unregenerate ; the same person in his unregenerate, and in his regenerate state, would substantially differ from himself ; and that you may easily apprehend how absurd it would be. But,

2. As to the reason of the name and the more general import of it ; by spirit we are to understand something spiritual, and which is of a spiritual nature ; the abstract being put for the concrete, which is a very ordinary elegance in the Scripture ; as well as it is many times in a contrary sense : You were darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord, Eph. 5. 8. The name is no more intended to hold forth to us, spirit, considered under a merely natural notion, without any adjunct, than, flesh, is intended to signify without any adjunct, and only in a merely natural sense. The thing which in general is intended to be held forth to us by this name, is, that frame of holiness, which is inwrought in souls by the Spirit of God in regeneration ; and which because it is a spiritual production, most agreeable to its productive cause, is therefore called here by the name of spirit. It is something which is many times in Scripture held forth to us by such other names as these ; sometimes it is called simply by the name of light ; " Now are ye light in the Lord ;" as if this product were nothing else but a beam of vigorous vital light, darted down from heaven into the hearts of men. Sometimes it is called by the name of life ; that is used, it is true, as an expression of a larger extent, than for the internal work of the Spirit, but it comprehends that too ; " Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." John v. 45. Many times it is so used as that the circumstances of the place do determine it more limitedly, to that peculiar sense. It is sometimes expressed by the seed of God, an incorruptible seed which is put into the souls of men. 1 Pet. 1. 23. 1 John. 3. 8, 9. 10. Sometimes it is called the new creature. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Gal. 6. 15.

If any man is in Christ he is a new creature. It is very usual to speak of the effect, and the operation too, by which that effect is wrought, the former under the name of creature: the latter under the name of creation: as here it is spoken of as a thing begotten; and the causative action, under the name of begetting. It is sometimes called the new man; the image of God; and God's workmanship. These different forms of expression, and if there are any more which are not in my thoughts, which are parallel to these, are only intended to signify one and the same thing; and what is here signified by the name of spirit.

But to give you somewhat a more particular account of this thing, this being, this creature, which is here signified by the name of spirit. Of this we have said it is not a distinct substance from the spirit of a man, and yet we must know concerning it in the

(1.) Place, that it is a distinct thing; or something, though not of another substance, which is yet superadded to the spirit of a man; and which the spirit of a man, considered according to its mere naturals, is destitute of; and which therefore lies without the whole sphere and compass of mere nature, or any of the improvements thereof. It is spoken of in the Scripture as a thing put on: Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness Col. 4. 10. There is something put off, and laid away; the old man, with his deeds. This shews it to be an adjunct, or a thing superadded to us; which is not only out of the compass of our natures, but is no more to be conceived as comprehended in that state, than a man's clothes which he puts on, are comprehended in the notion of his body. And in that it is called a new thing, as the new creature and the new man; it shews it to be an additional thing.

(2.) Though it is diverse and distinct from the spirit of a man; yet it is a most intimately inherent thing, and is most closely united, wherever it comes to obtain and take place. It is a spirit which gets into a man's spirit, a spirit put into spirit. That you may be renewed in the spirit of your minds, Eph. 4. 23. Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me, Ps. li. 10. It is the divine Spirit which is the formal renovating principle by which we are renewed; and our former natural spirit is the subject of it. And it is a thing which most inwardly seats and centers itself in a man's soul, and takes possession of his inmost soul, which is called the spirit of the mind; and which we must conceive to be to the soul, as the heart is to the body, so very inward and middle a part, and upon the account of which analogy it is that the name of heart is so often transferred thither to signify the inward part, or the

very innermost of the inner man. There it is that the Spirit doth most intimately inhere and reside. It is not a thing which lies in the surface of a man ; or consists in outward forms, or empty shews, or fruitless talk ; but it is something which is got into a man's heart, and hath insinuated and conveyed itself there.

(3.) It is alterative of its subject, or of that nature to which it is adjoined. It is so in it, as to make a very great alteration within, and to work a change where it comes. As leaven, to which this very thing is compared by our Lord which he here calls spirit, hath in it that fermentative virtue, by which it strangely alters the lump into which it is put, and whereto it is adjoined. It is incredible according to the accounts the chymists give, how very little and minute a portion shall quite alter and transform the mass into which it is put, so as to make it quite another thing. Such a thing is this begotten spirit, it is alterative of its subject ; and when it gets within a man, it makes him quite another thing from what he was. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; or which is all one, there is a new creature in him. Sometimes the whole man is spoken of as the subject of this production, and we are said to be new creatures, and the new creation is spoken of as being in us. It only carries this signification with it, that when a man is said to be begotten or regenerated, it is only said to be so *secundum quid*, or in this peculiar respect ; as having such a thing of new production now put into him. It is such a great change which is made, as that all things which were old, are said to be done away, and all that remains to be made new, 2 Cor. v. 17. This is nothing else but the same Spirit which is got into the heart of a man, and makes its subject new ; that is, to become a new heart and a right spirit, where it comes to obtain. It is not so with every thing which is put into another, or whereof another thing is contained ; you may put water into a bason, and it alters it nothing ; but this is such a thing which alters that which it is put into, and makes it quite another thing ; like putting some spirits into that water which changes the colour and quality of it.

(4.) It is universally diffused in its subject, as it is in its nature alterative of it. It is a thing universally diffused through the whole subject wherein it comes ; whence it is that the operation also is universal, and it makes a thorough change. They are very comprehensive expressions which the apostle uses concerning holiness or sanctification, (1 Thes. v. 23.) where he prays on the behalf of the Thessalonians ; That God would sanctify them wholly, or throughout, that is in their whole spirit, soul and body : he distinguishes these ; probably

meaning by the former, the soul, as rational ; by the second, the soul as sensitive ; and by the third, the corporeal body. It is plain this same created, begotten spirit, being designed to repair what was impaired by sin, must take place and spread itself as far as sin had done. That had vitiated and depraved the whole man, and is therefore called, a man ; the old man ; as having extended itself to all the powers, and faculties, and all the parts of a man : it is a man in a man. This spirit therefore is to be a man in a man too, and must spread into all the same powers and parts, which the former had done, and make a new man. Though it is true indeed, that the intelligent soul of man can only be formally the subject of this change, yet sin is by a sort of participation in the sensitive soul, and in the external senses and parts of the body ; and so must grace or holiness too. It is strange rhetoric the apostle uses in that collection of passages which we find in Rom. 3. from 10. onward, out of certain places of the old testament. The apostle designs to represent not only how universally sin had spread itself among all men ; but how it had spread itself through the whole of every man : as if they were so very full of sin, and so under the possession and power of it, that they belched it out of their throats, and through their lips ; acted it with their hands ; and made haste to it with their feet : Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways. They do nothing but work mischief wherever they come. Why, according to this same spreading, and diffusion of sin, which is here called flesh ; so must be that of the spirit too, enthroning itself in the very inwards of the soul, and having its residence there ; whilst thence it diffuses its energy and vital influence, through all the parts and powers of the man ; and leavens the whole lump. Both sin and holiness are represented to us upon the account of their diffusive nature, by a metaphor of the same kind ; by the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 6. and by our Saviour, Mat. 13. 33.

(5.) He must understand it to be a most excellent thing ; of a very high and great excellence, which is here called spirit. It is a most pure essence, and noble production, agreeable to its productive cause. How vain a thing is all this material world, if you abstract and sever spirit from it ? What a sluggish dull lump were all this mass of earth, and all the matter of the world, without spirit ? If you could imagine such a distinct thing as a spirit of nature, and we know there are operations which some call by that name, which in Scripture are simply ascribed to this same Spirit who is here spoken of under

the name of the Spirit. The great Almighty Spirit of God, in the creation of the world, did move upon the waters ; and in the continual sustentation, direction and government of the creatures, it hath its agency ; Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth, Psal. civ. 30. If we should conceive no such thing as spirit to influence this same material world, what a heap would it soon be ? As a house would in time become, only much sooner, which should never have any inhabitant, or any body to reside there ; for the influence of an inhabitant is not so much to keep the house up, as this Almighty Spirit is to keep up the frame of nature, and continue things in the course and order, wherein they naturally were. Upon this account, many of the more refined philosophers have made it very much their business, to speak debasingly and diminishingly of man, and to represent him as a despicable thing ; that is the mere body or matter separate from spirit ; which plainly carries this signification with it, that spirit was, in their account, a most excellent sort and kind of being. This expression, that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, holds forth this production to be such, that is, of the noblest kind. When the prophet would speak diminishingly and with contempt concerning the Egyptian power, he says, their horses are flesh and not spirit, Isa. 31. 3. They have no spirit in them ; an expression merely designed to set forth how little they were to be feared or regarded, and how contemptible they were.

(6.) It is a soul rectifying, or restoring thing. It being a thing of a very high excellence, must needs not only render the spirit of a man into which it is put, a great deal more excellent than it was ; but it was withal designed to restore it to its pristine excellence, and make it what it was, or what it ought to be. It is by this work or production in the spirits of men, that souls are said to be restored ; Thou restorest my soul, Psal. 23. 3. So far as this work hath taken place in me he hath brought me back and made me to return, where I was and ought to have been. It is therefore the very rectitude of the soul, or setting it right again : Create a right spirit within me, Psal. li. 10.

(7.) It is a divine thing, as we must needs understand it. For it is the birth and production of the divine Spirit, and is immediately from God ; and it is his very image ; and the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. It is something which is as it were copied out of God himself, and whereof he is at once both the immediate efficient and exemplar. And upon this account it is called, by the apostle, the divine nature. 2 Pet. 1. 4.

(8.) It is a thing by the very nature of it, instincted into a dependance upon God; or immediately dependant upon him as to its continual subsistence. There is a natural dependance which is common to all creatures, and essential to them as creatures. All have a kind of instinct drawn from the continual sustaining them, from the great Author of all: but this is a creature which depends knowingly and of choice; and so as to own and avow itself to be a depending creature: I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, Gal. 2. 20. And therefore there are continual breathings of desire after God: As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Psal. xlii. 1.

(9.) It is a creature which not only depends on God voluntarily and of choice, but aims at him, and tends to him as an end, and carries the heart and soul of a man to do so. It is by this same inwrought Spirit that the soul is principally rectified and set right towards God, so as to design him only, and to do all for him. Hence this becomes the sense of such a one; "I desire to be nothing, Lord, but for thee. My whole life and being are things of no value with me, but for thy sake. I care not whether I live or die; whether I am in the body or out of the body, is all one to me; for to me to live is Christ; and my great desire is, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. Phil. 1. 20, 21. And I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Gal. 2. 19. As soon as ever he becomes, in the former sense, dead; delivered from the law, and rescued from under the dominion and curse of it, he lives unto God. His life becomes a devoted thing; and the tenour and stream of all his thoughts and designs, and endeavours is altogether and wholly to him.

(10.) It is an active powerful thing: or a creature made for action and contest. It is a Spirit of power. 2 Tim. 1. 7. That which is born of God overcomes the world, 1 John. v. 4. This son of God, this product and begotten Spirit, is born of God. What? Shall not this son of God which is begotten of him, overcome? Nay, in whom it obtains, they are more than conquerors: they conquer over and over; they conquer abundantly and with the greatest advantage imaginable. It is to them who overcome, that the crown and throne are designed at last. They shall have a new name; and the heavenly hidden manna, and sit down with Christ upon his throne, as he overcame, and is set down upon the Father's throne, Rev. 3. 21.

(11.) It is an immortal thing, and which never dies. Spirit is a thing which essentially carries life in it, and therefore can never cease to live. It is an incorruptible seed, and

the seed of God put into the soul. He who is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remains in him, 1 John 3. 6. His seed, of whom he is born. Can that be a mortal thing? It is observable therefore, how the apostle argues concerning those, whom he supposes to have been the subjects of this mighty and blessed operation of the Spirit of God. If by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit, are the Sons of God, Rom. 8. 14. He takes it for granted they are the begotten sons of God, by the Spirit. And it is as if he had said; What do you think the sons of God shall not live? hath he begotten any mortal sons, or such as can corrupt and die? So those words are commonly, and very probably, understood to signify, Rev. 20. 6. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection; over him the second death shall have no power. I will not assert that to be the sense, but it is not improbable to be so. They who are regenerate, and have got this Spirit of life into them; they have got that in them which will spring up into life everlasting: having their fruit unto holiness then end is eternal life. As our Saviour speaks, John 4. 14. and the apostle Paul, Rom. 6. 22.

You have by these hints some account, what kind of thing this same begotten Spirit is, when it is said, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The time doth not allow at present, to go farther in the explicatory part: I would hint this one thing by way of use before we depart, that we take heed of diminishing, or thinking slightly and meanly of this mighty distinguishing work of the Spirit of God. They are awful words, if duly considered, That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There is nothing to be found in all this world, worthy the name of spirit, but that which is born immediately of the Spirit, and is its offspring. Our Saviour speaks in the other part of the verse manifestly in a way of contempt; That which is born of the flesh is flesh: that is but flesh, which is born of flesh! That is, men considered in their mere naturals only, or in this present corrupted state of nature. We must understand the whole being of man, to be the corrupted subject; and so to be altogether comprehended, under the name of flesh; his very soul and natural spirit itself in opposition to Spirit, in the other part of the verse, as the antithesis plainly shews. Let a man be of never so refined intellectuals, or great accomplishments; let him be never so much a man, and humanity cultivated to the highest pitch and degree; without this same additional superadded Spirit; he is nothing else but a lump of flesh. If this thought did sink into the hearts of men, what despicable and self loathing thoughts would they have of them-

selves, while as yet they can find nothing of this begotten increated Spirit in them; while that Spirit is not yet come into me by which I live to God, and my soul is turned to him, and set on him, framed for him, and made active towards him, and on his behalf; all this while I am as if I were a body and no more, or a mere breathless carcass. For plain it is that to all the actions and comforts of the divine life, a man in his mere naturals, is as to these things, as a carcass is to the actions of a man: that is, a carcass can as well read and discourse, and travel, and trade, as a man in whom this Spirit is not, can love God, take pleasure in him, act in pure devotedness to him, design him as a portion, and have respect to him as such. So that now if men did but allow themselves the liberty of reflection, it could not be but sometime or other this would be their communing with themselves: "Either I have this new super-added Spirit, or I have not: if I have, sure such a thing as I have heard it is, would make some work in my soul, and shew itself; it could not be latent there; I should find some changes and transformation wrought in me. And if I have not, then where am I? In how dismal and forlorn a state! it is for me to go and dwell among graves, for I am as a carcass, but a piece of spiritless flesh, or breathless lump." Oh that right thoughts of our case upon this account, might once obtain, and take place. If this Spirit is not in us, then we are dead creatures; if we have any thing of life in us, it is because the Spirit of the living God hath infused, and increated it. It is of no small concernment if this latter is our case, to observe and view the Spirit of God aright. And if the former is our case, to see to it, and deal truly with our own souls, while any natural breath remains, in order to the regaining that spiritual life, by which we may be capable of breathing spiritually. Methinks one should have a restless mind after it; Oh I have no spirit within me; nothing that moves towards God; no sense of him, or breathings after him. Oh that I were more acquainted with it. It is strange that there should be life, and no such motion; and impossible there should be this begotten spirit, and we should find no change within.

SERMON II.*

WE have proposed in order to the explication of the text, these three things, 1 To consider the product here spoken of, under the name of the Spirit. 2 The productive cause, or the divine parent, to which this birth owes itself; The spirit. 3. The kind of the production expressed here by being born, or begotten. We have already spoken to the first of those, and proceed now to the

II. The productive cause, which is here styled, in an emphatical sense, the Spirit. This name being spoken of the spirit, is commonly observed and known to be taken two ways, either essentially, or personally: essentially, so it signifies the nature of God; the pure perfect spirituality of that blessed Spirit: So it is said, John 4. 24. God is a Spirit. But most frequently it is taken in the other sense, personally; that is, to signify the person known by that name; the third in the Godhead who by eternal spiration proceeds from the Father and Son. That which I at present design is to speak of this blessed Spirit, the parent of this great production, as such; and therefore shall not so much discourse to you concerning the Spirit absolutely considered; as in this relation, or as the author of this work wrought in the spirits of men. What we are to conceive of it, as it is a subsistence in the Godhead; or what its agency and operations may be, between the Father and Son; or what the kind and nature of that eternal Spirit is, and by what way it collectively proceeds from both, we are left very much in the dark, as being things of less concernment to us. But what is of more importance to us, we find more clearly, and expressly spoken of, that is, how we are to con-

* Preached December 5th, 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

sider it in relation to the creation. And so we are taught most evidently to look upon it as the great author of all those influences and operations, which are properly attributable to God, or any where have place throughout the whole creation ; whether we speak of the old creation or the new ; and both within the sphere of nature and grace.

Within the sphere of nature it must be acknowledged the author of universal nature, howsoever diversified, and in whatsoever creatures, and must be conceived to have influenced, and still to influence, all the creatures, both in the works of creation and providence. Both these are manifestly attributed to the Spirit of God in Scripture. It was said in the creation to be upon the waters, (Gen. I. 2.) to be every where infusing its vital influence, through the chaos which was then to be formed and digested, and put into order. By it the world is as it were new created every day ; thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created ; and renewest the face of the earth, Psal. civ. 30. And by his Spirit the Lord doth garnish the heaven, as well as renew the face of the earth, Job. 26. 13. So that we do not need to seek after another distinct spirit of nature, much less an irrational and unintelligent one, as some fancy ; yea, pagan light hath gone so far in some, as to understand it to be a mind, and intelligent spirit which doth every where diffuse formative, and governing influence, through this great creation. And being by its nature immense, it is every where at hand to answer every such purpose which the exigence of the case in order to the creature's renewing, doth require. But our greater and more direct concern is to consider it as the author of all operations, within the sphere of grace, and the new creation. This is it which the text doth manifestly intend, that is, to be the operator in that great work by which men are to be new formed, for that new and other kingdom, which God is raising up to himself in this world, out of the ruins of that kingdom of nature, which he hath, and still holds over all. And we must understand it to be with great propension, and the highest pleasure, that this blessed Spirit hath undertaken, and doth perform this so important work ; if we consider it under the name and style of the Spirit of grace, as it is called Heb. 10. 29. It takes itself to be despised when the truth is not received, or when it is rejected, and men revolt from it ; which is the great instrument by which this work of the Holy Ghost is to be effected and wrought upon the spirits of men. As you know there can be done to none a greater despite than to cross them in a design, upon which they are intent and unto which they are carried by a strong propension and inclination of mind. Here lies the emphasis and high pitch of aggravation and the malignity of this

wickedness, that the Spirit of all goodness and benignity and love and sweetness is despited by them: They can find nothing else to turn the spite upon, but the Spirit of grace. Consider it under this character, and we must understand this work to be undertaken by it with the greatest propension, and performed with the highest pleasure. Looking down upon this forlorn world, and beholding all things waste, and ruin: nature in the best master-piece of the creation, grown degenerate, depraved, a poisonous and horrid thing; why, pity and compassion has been stirred up to the world, and that immense Spirit hath gone forth full of love and goodness; full of vital influence, being designed to the office of doing a blessed work, here and there, wherever it finds its work to lie; and that the new creation might be made to spring up out of the wastes and desolations of the old. As a Spirit of grace we must understand it very intent upon this work and highly pleased with it.

And as a Spirit of power, we must suppose it to go on in this work with efficacy, and to crown it with most certain and glorious success. It will not be baffled out of its work, or suffer itself to be put beside its office, unto which it hath been designed and appointed, for so happy a purpose. And wherever it is that we find the state of souls bettered, and any thing done to form and prepare meet subjects for God's kingdom; we are most manifestly taught to ascribe all such work to this blessed Spirit. It is his appropriate office to refine the spirits of men to that pitch, as that they may be capable of their own name again; that is to be called spirit, when the whole man before, is called flesh, till this divine work pass upon it.

This will be evident by considering the several parts of this work; and you can instance in none whereunto the Spirit of God is not entitled. Is holy light and knowledge a part? This Spirit is, upon that account, called the Spirit of knowledge, Isa. 11. 2. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation; Eph. 1. 17. This is implied in the following words; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know the hope of your calling. Is again, faith a part of this work? as certainly it is; for they who believe are said to be, born not of flesh nor of blood, or of the will of man but of God. John 1. 13. Why in reference hereto, it is styled, the Spirit of faith. 2 Cor. 4. 13. We having the same spirit of faith; that is, the same with David who is quoted there; we believe and therefore speak. It is plainly signified to us, that this same Spirit is always employed as a Spirit of faith, and works uniformly from age to age; so that just as it wrought in David at so many hundred years distance, so it wrought in Paul. Is again, love a part of this work in the souls of men? It is styled in Scrip-

ture the Spirit of love. 2 Tim. 1. 7. He hath given us the Spirit of love. That pure and holy love by which the soul unites with God, becomes devoted to him, enjoys solace, and satisfies itself in him. And again, is hope a part of it? Why it is attributed to this same Spirit: christians do abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, Rom. 15. 13. Again, is joy a part, and principle in this new creation? That is called joy in the holy Ghost, Rom. 14. 17. Is meekness a part? This same Spirit upon that account is called, the Spirit of meekness, Gal. 6. 1. If that is understood to signify the habit of meekness in the soul of a christian; yet that connotes a reference to this Spirit as the author of that gracious frame and disposition, and the name itself might congruously enough be understood of the blessed Spirit itself, as such a work is under the power and dominion of that Spirit, who is herein the Spirit of meekness in those in whom it is wrought. Is the fear of the Lord a part? It is called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, which rests upon him who is the rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch growing out of his roots. Isa. 11. 1. And it is the same Spirit, and under the same characters, which is given to all who are united to him; and anointed with the same Spirit. If you would have sundry such particulars as have been mentioned together, you have an enumeration somewhat distinct, Gal. 5. 22. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Would you take what is more summary and comprehensive, and contains all such particulars together? Holiness is of such a comprehensive nature: and it is called the Spirit of holiness, Rom. 1. 4. And the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth: that universal rectitude which ever comes to have place in the spirits of any. You have the equivalent of it in another expression; it is called the Spirit of a sound mind. 2 Tim. 1. 7. Which signifies an entire good habit of soul in all kinds and respects; or that renovation of soul by which a man becomes a new man. So we are renewed in the Spirit of the mind, putting off the old man, and putting on the new. Eph. 4. 23, 24. But if you go to the transcendental attributes, as I may call them, of this new creature, you have them still referred to this Spirit. Life is such a one; for that is capable of being spoken of every gracious principle; it is lively faith, and lively hope, &c. Why, this is the Spirit of life, which gives life. 2 Cor. 3. 6. Power is such another; for that is also capable of being spoken of every grace, it may be more or less powerful. There is the power of faith, the strength of love and hope, &c. And it is called the Spirit of power, in reference hereunto, 2 Tim. 1. 7.

And elsewhere, the Spirit of might, Isa. 11. 2. If we go to what is preparatory to this work, or the convictions which must pass upon the spirits of men in order to it, this blessed Spirit is entitled to that as the great author of them. John 16. When the Spirit the comforter is come, he will convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. When the comforter is come: the word is indifferently capable of being rendered the advocate; or the great pleader, and he who undertakes to manage the cause of Christ and Christianity against the world. He, when he is come, will make work in the spirits and consciences of men; He will make the world understand what they are so unapt to understand, their own sin, my righteousness and the power of that judgment and government, which is to be set up, in order to the saving whoever shall be saved; or this very kingdom, which is spoken of in the preceding verse. If we respect what is consequential, and following upon this work; consolations of renewed souls; they are called, the consolations of the Holy Ghost; and the church's walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were edified. Acts 9. 31. All their pre-assurances of the possessing of the eternal inheritance, are owing to the Spirit, as the earnest of that inheritance. Eph. 1. 14. 2 Cor. 5. 5. And the Spirit of adoption, Rom. 8. 15. If we consider the pregustations and foretastes of heaven and glory, which souls now enjoy sometimes in their way; these are called the first fruits of the Spirit, Rom. 8. 23. If we respect the exercises of the new creature, when once there is an infused principle; or any thing of an habitual frame of a holy mind, comes to obtain in us; these are still constantly attributed to the Spirit. As the mortifying of sin; If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, Rom. 8. 13. Leading a holy life, or walking in a way or course of holiness, is called walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit. Gal. 5. 16. The life of christians is here-upon a sowing to the Spirit, whence of the Spirit they receive at length, life everlasting, in Gal. 6. 8. Right worship is attributed to the Spirit. Prayer, which is worthy of the name, is praying in the Holy Ghost, Jude 20. and worshipping in general, if it is right, is worshipping in Spirit and truth, John 4. 24. which may be meant, under dominion of God's own Spirit. But more expressly, Phil. 3. 3. We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit. So that look upon what you will relating to the new creature, and every thing of it is attributed to the Spirit, as the productive cause. Consider its parts, its sum, its exercises, its properties; consider what is preparatory to it, or consequently upon it; consider what it

doth, and what it enjoys ; and all is resolved into this great principle, the Spirit.

III. We are next to consider the kind of the production, which is signified by a peculiar expression, begetting : for so it is indifferently capable of being rendered, either born or begotten. This is a distinguishing sort of production ; there are many ways of production, to which the name of begetting will not square. Our further work must therefore be, to shew you the peculiar import of this expression, and what is designed to be signified by it. It plainly holds forth to us such things as these,

1. It imports the productions to be of a living thing. Begetting is a natural, vital production. All productions are not so : but there is nothing properly said to be begotten, but that which lives. Begetting, it is true, goes as low as to the lowest kind of life ; as to vegetives : that is not only *altrix*, and *auctrix*, but *procreatrix*, which propagates its kind ; but it never goes lower, and is never carried to things inanimate. They are not said to beget, or be begotten, which are in their kind dead things ; it reaches not the meaner sort of natural productions ; much less to artificial ones. A man is not said to beget a house, when he builds it ; or any thing else which is made by the art of man. This production, inasmuch as it is signified by the name of begetting, signifies it to be a living thing. And therefore we are to know, that whatsoever it is of religion which any one pretends to, if it is a dead religion, and without life, it is an artificial religion ; and you know any thing which belongs to us, which doth not partake of life with us, and from us ; we can without any inconvenience, or trouble, shake it artificially, as we please, this way, or that. Many a man's religion is a cloak to him, which is no living thing ; and a man may alter and change the fashion of it ; and put it off, and on, and never put himself to any pain. But if a man's religion is a living thing, and is animated by a life, as it were, common to him and it ; why, that must not admit of alterations. We cannot shape our limbs as we please, though we may our cloaths, for they are enlivened by that Spirit of life, which runs through the whole body. They who have a religion made up of dead formalities and duties in which there is no life, no soul ; cannot be said to be born of the Spirit, and it is no production of his.

2. It imports the production of a thing of like nature, to its productive cause. There is a likeness of nature between the cause and the effect, and from such a creature begetting, a creature of a like nature doth proceed. Upon this account, though a parent is truly said by way of begetting, to produce a

child : yet he doth not by way of begetting make any other effect, which is not of that kind ; as a house, a picture, or suit of cloaths, &c. It is very true indeed, we are not to strain this matter so far as if this were a univocal production which is here intended ; which begetting doth not properly signify : Yet neither is it equivocal ; when the thing produced is of quite a diverse nature, from the productive cause ; but there is an analogy and proportion between the one and the other. There is something in that which is begotten, which doth in nature correspond and answer to that which doth beget, even wherein the one is begotten and the other begets. And what doth that speak ? The production here spoken of, is not the production of a man, as a man ; but of a saint, as a saint ; or of a christian, as such ; and therein is an agreement, or correspondency. What is it which makes a saint ? That is holiness. Why we find this both in the cause, and in the effect. The Apostle presses the exhortation ; Be ye holy, as I am holy, 1 Pet. 1. 16. It is a vain and absurd thing to call God Father, and pretend to be begotten of him : if you are not holy as he is holy ; and nothing of his holiness appears in you.

3. In the very business itself of regeneration, passiveness in the subject is manifestly imported : for who can contribute to his own being born ; that is, as to the thing itself of being begotten. We are here indeed to consider a production not *simpliciter*, but *secundum quid* ; that is, a creature in a creature ; or something begotten in that which was begotten before. There is a new work to be done where there was a pre-existing subject ; and that a rational and intelligent one. There is much therefore properly to be done, and necessary to be done in order to this work, but there is nothing to be done in it, but only to be born : we are therein truly passive. Faith comes by hearing ; that is a previous thing, and that we may do, and can do. We can suppose nothing more subversive of religion, than the contrary : for it is all one to say, The gospel is not at all necessary to regeneration, which is the end ; as to say that the hearing of it, and understanding and considering of it, is not necessary. The gospel is neither necessary, nor significant, nor useful to the purpose of conversion and regeneration, otherwise than as the minds and understandings come to be employed about it ; and this they do as men ; and this way the Spirit, who is as the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, doth, as the season of grace is arbitrarily and freely chosen ; come in with that influence, by which men are made saints, and then capable of acting as such.

4. The impossibility of resisting, so as to frustrate or prevent it. Being born signifies such a way of production, as

whereto we cannot oppose ourselves, or any power which should prevent, or promote it. Such a resistance as should hinder God's designed work, or the good pleasure of his will, in this case, does not take place. This is intimated in this form of speech. For this is a production, not of a separate single substance, by itself; but a creature in a creature. It is true indeed that the spirit of a man, as he was constituted, before any such work as this came to obtain, was apt enough to resist; but all that aptitude to resistance shall be overcome, whensoever that influence is put forth, by which this work is done.

And here, there needs a caution too, as well as in reference to the former head. Some may be apt to apprehend; if this work is wrought and done, by such an irresistible power, to which no opposition can be made; what need we trouble ourselves; when God will do such a work, he will do it: it will never be in our power to hinder it, and we need never be afraid, that we shall. To this it may be said, and it ought to be seriously considered; that though there is no possibility of such resistance to that influence by which this work is done, wheresoever it is done, which could have prevented the doing of it; yet there are many previous workings, in order to it, wherein the Spirit of God is frequently resisted; that is, the workings and operations of common grace, which lead and tend to this special work of grace. And here lies the great danger, when in these common precursory works of the Holy Ghost, which have a tendency in them to this work, and by which it is gradually moving on; they may resist and oppose themselves, to a total, utter, eternal miscarriage. The Spirit of God in this work, can never be resisted; but so as that it will certainly overcome and effect its work. But we must know that he is a free Agent; and there is reason to apprehend there is the same reason in chusing the degree of operation, as there is of the subject. It doth not only work where it listeth; but to what degree it listeth of power and efficacy: and when it is working but at the common rate, then it suffers itself many times to be overcome, and yields the victory to the contending sinner. You see what the charge was upon the people of Israel by Stephen, Acts 7. 51. Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear; ye do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did, so do ye. It is remarkable to this purpose what this blessed man charges that people with; that this was the genius of that people from age to age, from one generation to another. Ye do always resist, &c. The same spirit of enmity and contrariety is still propagated and transmitted from one age to another, your fathers are like their fathers, and their fathers-like theirs; and so run on back as far as you will; they were always a people resisting and contending against

the Holy Ghost : as the complaint was against them not long before, Isai. 63. 10. They rebelled and vexed his Spirit, therefore he turned and fought against them, and became their enemy. And that this is the common temper, is most evident, and was so even in the more early ages of the world. My Spirit shall not always strive with man, Gen. 6. 3. That striving implies a resistance. There is great danger of resisting the Spirit of God, when it is in that method and way of operation, wherein it many times yields to the resistance. It is as if he should say to the sinner ; " Because thou hast so great a mind to get the day, and deliver thyself from under the power of my grace, get that unhappy victory, and perish by it."

5. It imports the integrity and perfection of the product, and that the thing begotten is an entire thing. There doth not use to be born one simple member, but an entire creature; and there is a concurrence in the constitution of it, of whatsoever belongs to this sort and kind of creature. And though there are some kinds within the sphere of nature of mutilous and maimed persons, imperfect productions; yet we must know, that this doth by a peculiarity belong to this great parent, the Spirit of God in reference to all those productions which are within the sphere of grace; that there are never any imperfect productions there. His work is perfect, which is the character of his work in general; and especially when he is forming a people for himself, as he speaks Deut. 32. 4. He is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment. And of those who receive not the distinguishing stamp and impress upon them; it is said, their spot is not the spot of his children. ver. 5. There is nothing in them by which they should be known to be his children. Wheresoever the Spirit of God begets, it begets perfect births; that is, according to the common distinction, and a just and necessary one, speaking of a perfection of parts, not of degrees. A child hath as many parts as a man, though not so strong and large. There is an entire concurrence of every gracious and holy principle in the heart, which goes to the composition of the new creature, wherever we can say, that any one is born of the Spirit. And therefore men who pretend to have passed this birth, and yet it appears most manifestly that it is but a maimed production, as it is in too many instances, with several sorts of persons; they carry that about them, which is a confutation of their own pretences. As suppose the case to be this. Some pretend very highly to faith, but they have no humility, no meekness, no self denial. Why, their pretence carries along with it that which confutes itself; for the Holy Ghost is the author of no such imperfect births. There are some who pretend highly in

point of duty towards God, and think themselves altogether exceptionable, in respect of the frame of their spirits and their performances as to the commands of the first table; but bring them to the second, and there is no impression at all of any thing like the mind and will of God appearing in their hearts and lives. Men will pray, and read, and hear; go from sermon to sermon; take one opportunity after another of attending upon religious exercises; but in the mean time they will cheat and cozen, revile and reproach their neighbours and those they have to do with. How unlike is such a production as this to the Spirit of God, when men are made christians thus by halves!

So on the other hand, there are those who will be very punctual and exact in reference to the duties of the second table, and it may be to an eminency, and very high degree; so strictly just in all their performances, so orderly in the relations wherein they stand; yea some very charitable, and apt to do good to others; but bring them to matters which relate to God, and what they can say of living in communion with God; how their hearts stand towards praying to him, and meditating on him; what inclinations or dispositions they have towards an eternal blessedness: to all these things they are silent and have nothing to say. The matter speaks itself in this case; that which is born spirit of spirit, is certainly born a perfect thing as to all the parts which appertain and belong to this creature: and therefore where there are so remarkable maims, it is too manifest this production is none of that divine production by which a man is said to be born spirit of spirit.

6. It imports the permanency of the thing produced, and that it is a fixed and settled habit in the soul. As to things which are merely fluid and transient, we know no such things to which the name of begetting, can with any propriety be applied; as a book or glass of wine, &c. And therefore it must be very unsuitable to the meaning and design of such expressions as these, to think that only better actions are the product in the work of regeneration; and that a man is hence to be denominated regenerate, because he doth better things than he did before; and there is some kind of reformation and amendment of life. It is true indeed the apostle says, He who doth righteousness is righteous, and is born of God. 1 John 2. 29. But what doth that mean? Not that the doing of righteousness is the *productus terminus* in this birth, but an argument that there is such a thing produced, or enabled and rendered capable of doing righteousness; that is, by being made habitually and internally righteous. But to think that there should be so many great expressions in the word of God concerning

this product ; that it should be called a divine nature, the new man, the seed of God, God's own image ; and when we come to inquire what this is, that any should run the matter into this ; it is an action, a good action or two. What ! is the divine nature and image, a few good actions ? And they who are wont to conceive so of the matter, commonly take up with actions which are far from being any of the best too ; and so bring the matter to a very poor pass at last. Certainly this form of expression doth hold forth to us, a fixed permanent effect, and our habitual frame which remains and abides in the soul of a man, and will be an immortal thing.

7 It imports somewhat relating to matter of privilege, that is, a relation to him who begets, as a child. He who is begotten is related as a child, to him who doth beget ; and has consequently a title to his care and providence ; as every parent thinks himself bound to make provision for his children. They who are begotten of God, are hence at the first step capable of the denomination of sons, or children. And then you know how the apostle rises with it, (Rom. 8. 17.) If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; that if we suffer with him, we may be also glorified together. They who are begotten, fall under his immediate care, and he takes himself concerned to make provision for them ; they are a part of his family, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. If a man will not take care of his own, and they who are of his own house, he denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel : and it is never to be imagined that God will deal so with his family, or children. We must carry the matter of this begetting then as high as heaven ; He hath begotten us again to a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. 1 Pet. 1. 4. We are not only to consider, what is born when such a production as this takes place ; but what such a one is born to. He is born an heir, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ : a vast patrimony it is, which they have a share and part in.

Now take all these things together, and it will appear not a mean or little work, which is intended by this expression, of being born or begotten spirit of spirit. Let us therefore take heed of derogating from this great work, or making little of it, as if it were some small trivial thing. Certainly it is not a slight thing, which finally and eternally distinguisheth between them who shall be saved, and them who perish ; and is the discriminating mark between the children of God, and other men ; or the new seed and race, raised up by God to himself ; and the rest of the apostate world, who are called the seed and children of the devil. There are but these two seeds in the

world ; and it cannot be a small thing which doth distinguish them. Therefore take heed of thinking little of this work. And as we should take heed of derogating from it, so we should take equal heed of arrogating too much to ourselves upon the account of it. For what have we contributed to our being actually born or begotten ? And take heed of censorious discriminations in your own thoughts concerning persons, or diversely denominated parties of men, pretending to religion. As to say, They who are of such a way, they it is likely are regenerate ; but they of such a way, are not regenerate. This is to forget that the Spirit, as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goes ; and is as much as in effect to say : “Lo ! here is Christ, and there is Christ !” This very work wrought in the soul is called Christ formed in us ; the name being put for the image or likeness. We should take heed of saying, Here he is, or there he is ; and know that the kingdom of God (and the kingdom of God in one notion of it, that is, subjectively considered, is not a diverse thing from the frame of holiness, inwrought in the soul) doth not consist in externals, in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. 14. 17. And in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. Gal. 6. 15. The new creature may be found in the circumcision or in the uncircumcision ; and it is no matter of which sort one is of, if the work of the new creature do not obtain, and take place. This is therefore much to be minded, and sought, and valued, even for itself, and upon the account of its own intrinsic necessity and excellence. It is enough to recommend any man to me, that there is a visible impress, so far as that thing can be visible of the new creature upon his soul ; for whosoever loves him who begets, loveth him also who is begotten of him. 1 John 5. 1.

SERMON III.*

WE have proposed to consider this truth from these words—That there is a work to be done upon all who shall partake in the kingdom of God, by which they are to be born spirit of spirit.—We have opened the work itself according to the several terms in the text ; and have spoke to the effect, or production ; that is, to make men spirit, who before were flesh ;—the productive cause, the Spirit, and —the kind of the production, which is by begetting.

That, which we have next to speak to, is the *necessity* of this work ; that is, the necessity of it unto this end and purpose ; namely, the rendering men capable of a place and partnership in God's kingdom. And as the former head we have hitherto been speaking of, does lie in the words of the text, looking upon them in their absolute consideration, so we are led to the latter, by the relative consideration of them, or in the reference they have to the foregoing discourse. For our Saviour having said before, that "except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit ; he cannot see, or enter into the kingdom of God :—" he doth in this verse, subjoin a reason why he cannot. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore there must be somewhat born of the Spirit which may be suitable thereto. In evincing therefore to you the necessity of such a work to such an end ; it will be requisite,

I. To give you some account of that kingdom, for which such a work as this is so necessarily preparatory.

* Preached December 19th, 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

I will not trouble you with many distinctions about it, only we are necessarily to distinguish it, as we may in the common notion of a kingdom, into a kingdom taken formally and actively; so it signifies the royal state, and governing power of a kingdom. In that since the kingdom of God or Christ, is manifestly understood in the prayer of the thief: "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom:" that is, into that dignity and royal state, which I believe thou wilt shortly be in. But then it is very often, and familiarly taken too objectively, for the bulk and body of the community, or the subjects who are under such a king. So we take ours in common speech; and so is the kingdom of God very often taken, when we read of the increase and growth of it under the metaphorical expressions which represent it to us in the gospel. Kingdom taken in the former sense, doth either signify that which is more strictly formal, and so which is appropriate and communicable to the king himself, in such a kingdom; and not communicable to others with him: that is the sovereign power, by which he doth in common govern his subjects. Or else, there may be somewhat consequential to that which is more strictly formal; and which doth more accidentally belong to the king; and is communicable, and in a secondary sense, capable of being imparted and derived, to many at least, among his subjects; those especially, whom he more particularly favours. And that is such honour and dignity as comes to be reflected upon such and such persons, by their relation to such a king. In that sense a kingdom is said to be given and communicated to the people of God: I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed to me a kingdom. Luke 22. 29. Fear not, little flock; it is the Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you. There are several things wherein especially, favourite subjects do partake in a kingdom, with him who supremely rules, and holds and exercises the sovereign power. We would consider as belonging to the state of a king, great opulency and riches, splendour and glory, pleasure and delight, beyond what we must suppose common with other men. In this respect the appellation is given; Ye have reigned as kings without us; I would to God you did reign, that we might reign with you, 1 Cor. 4. 8. They were a sort of *tanquam* kings, speaking of that free state and condition wherein they were, and exempted from suffering: they had plentiful enjoyments beyond what the apostle could have. And so in this kingdom of God, all who do partake in it, are in these respects, said to be kings; Unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood: and made us kings and priests unto God, and our

Father. Rev. 1. 6. That is, in pursuance of God's design, and according to his purpose and intendment, he hath done his work to his hand, which he appointed him to do, in this kingly part. To enter into the kingdom, and behold and see the kingdom, which are the expressions our Saviour uses in this context, may very well be understood to signify one and the same thing; only that one must according to the manifest import, denote the first introduction into that kingly state; and the other, the continued enjoyment of it; which seeing is frequently expressive of in the Scripture. Nothing is more usual than to signify enjoyment and fruition, by sight, or vision; because that is the noblest of our external senses; and so (an expression being to be used which is borrowed from sense) the most emphatical, and to the present purpose; the blessedness of heaven is hence expressed by seeing; "The Angels behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Follow holiness, without which no man shall see God."

But we are a little further to pursue that notion of a kingdom as it is taken in that latter sense, objectively, and as by the name of a kingdom, is signified the governed community, or the body of the people who are under government. The kingdom of God taken in this sense, is either made up of involuntary, or voluntary subjects; either such whom he governs with their own good liking and consent; or such as he governs whether they will or no, and although they never choose to be under his government. As for that kingdom of his, which takes in involuntary, unwilling subjects; they are either such as are so by natural incapacity, or by vicious disinclination. They who are so by natural incapacity, as also unintelligent creatures, who are never capable of choosing God to be their governor and king: and they who are not willing through vicious disinclination; who though they have that nature which was originally capable of intellection, and so consequently of election and choice; yet the pure powers and faculties by which they were capable of it, are now become so depraved, that they disaffect his kingdom, and cannot endure to be under his government. And this kingdom of his, which takes in involuntary subjects, whether intelligent, or unintelligent, doth measure with the universe. It is the kingdom of nature, and no one needs any other qualification to be in that kingdom, but to be in *rerum natura*. If he is an existent creature, he is in that kingdom without any more to do; but that is not the kingdom here meant.

There is therefore another kingdom which comprehends and takes in only a willing people, made "willing in the day of his

power ;" who with choice and consent of their own hearts, subject themselves to him, to whom it is a pleasant thought (as often as it comes into their minds) that the Lord reigns. They triumph in it, and please themselves and glory in it, and pay a joyful homage to him, as the supreme and eternal King. It is into this kingdom that none can enter, but they who are born spirit of spirit. And this kingdom also is to be considered in a twofold state ; either in its inchoate, or consummate state. Inchoate is that which we commonly call the kingdom of grace ; and consummate the kingdom of glory. Now to be born spirit of spirit, is necessary to any one's having a place in this kingdom, considered either way, or in either state. The inchoate kingdom, you know, for a long time, lay principally among the people of the Jews and they were so apprehensive of their privilege and condition upon that account, and did so highly value it, that it was even a principle among them, that none could come into that kingdom, without being in a sort new born ; as some have taken notice who have been well acquainted with their antiquities and usages. And therefore they whoever came to be proselyted to their religion, and who were not native Jews ; if they arrived to that degree of proselytism, which made them more complete proselytes, that is, were proselytes of justice ; when they came to be initiated, solemnly renounced their earthly relations, all their former kindred and acquaintance, so far that they should not have any power over them to detract or draw them back from the religion in which they were engaged. And so they were looked upon as men *recens nati* ; as if they had then newly come into the world, and had a new sort of relations to which they were strangers before. And these proselytes were also hereupon solemnly admitted, through the use of the ceremony of washing in water ; to which the words of our Saviour in the foregoing verse, seem to have a manifest reference : "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Upon this account he blames Nicodemus for his great ignorance, who was a master among the Jews. Not that we are to suppose that he thought him ignorant, that there was such a usage among them ; but that he no more understood the reason and meaning of their common practice, and should make himself so great a stranger, to that which was the true import of such a ceremony. And therefore our Saviour says, "Except a man is born of water, and of the Spirit ;" not therein laying the great stress, upon being born of water ; for that is a thing he admits and takes for granted : and he implies in this expression his intendment to settle and establish that as an ordinance transferred from the Jewish to the Chris-

tian church, and to continue there ; but that upon which he lays the weight, and where the emphasis lies, is the latter expression ; "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit." As if he had said ; "You are apt to lay a great stress upon that ceremony you use of baptizing with water, when any persons are initiated into the church of God ; and though that is not nothing, yet you must know, if there is not a being born and baptized of the Spirit, as well as of water ; it signifies nothing to your having a place in the kingdom of God, or to any one's else." This is a usual thing in Scripture to join two matters together, in one tenour and form of speech, where the stress is mainly laid upon the latter, and sometimes only upon it. Rom. 6. 17. God be thanked that you were the servants of sin ; but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you. What are thanks given to God for ? These are both joined together in the same form of speech : sure he never intended to give thanks for their having been the servants of sin. But the weight and emphasis is to be all carried to that which follows ; "But you have obeyed the form of doctrine which was delivered to you." So here, "Except a man is born of water, and of the Spirit." As though he had said, I admit of the fitness and requisiteness that persons should be baptized with water ; for that is intimated here, that it shall obtain as a constant usage in the very kingdom of God ; but except unto that being born or baptized of water, there is the superaddition of being born of the Spirit, which that of water was but a signal of, no one is any way qualified for the kingdom of God ; and cannot have any entrance into it, according to the inchoate, or consummate state of it.

II. And now to evince the necessity of it, it will be only needful to consider,

1. It would be most unsuitable to the Supreme Ruler over this kingdom, that any should come into it who are not new born. For we are to consider, that this is not the kingdom of nature, as was said, but a kingdom founded, not in nature, but in choice. It is true it were no incongruity, or reflection upon the great and glorious King of this kingdom, if it were only that constitution, and there were nothing requisite to give one a place in it, but to be in being ; it would be no dishonour, I say, to him to have sinners, and devils too, in his kingdom, if that were all : but considering that this is a kingdom of select persons, and that he makes choice between some and others, and by which he distinguishes some from others ; it were a most unreasonable thing in this case to suppose, that he should take in promiscuously persons of so vastly different tempers and dispositions, as they who are born only of the flesh,

and they who are born of the Spirit ; or that when he goes to make a distinction, he should make a distinction without a difference, and should take just such as he leaves, and leave just such as he takes ; that were most unworthy of the divine wisdom, and the holiness or purity of his nature. This being a kingdom of chosen ones, it is to be supposed, that he should make them whom he chooses, suitable to himself. Therefore it is most strictly insisted upon, and highly charged upon them who come to stand visibly related to this kingdom, that they approve themselves suitable to it. Observe the expression of the apostle, 1 Thes. 2. 12. You know how I exhorted you, and how I comforted you, and how I charged you, that you should walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory. The great stress is laid upon a suitable becoming deportment, such as may not be reflecting and reproachful to the blessed and glorious God, who had called them to his kingdom and glory. It was therefore upon this account necessary, inasmuch as they must be rendered suitable to their king, who come into this kingdom ; that the Almighty Spirit should be employed, go forth with power, and diffuse its mighty influence, and form and prepare men to be of this kingdom. And that was not to be done but by this begetting them spirit of spirit, and that they who come into this kingdom, might be at once both subjects and sons ; for the kingdom is spoken of both under the notion of a kingdom and of a family ; that family which is on earth, named from our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph. 3. 15. It is not suitableness enough in this case, that it is a kingdom of rational and intelligent creatures : that would indeed give a natural suitableness ; God is the God of the spirits of all flesh. Num. 16. 22. But it is most manifest here that the spirit in the latter expression, is not taken in a natural sense, any more than flesh, in the foregoing part of the verse. Our Saviour doth manifestly speak of flesh there contemptibly, and seems to cast an ignominy upon it ; whereas mere natural flesh is a very innocent, harmless thing. And it is no more spirit that is taken in a natural sense ; but as by the flesh, is meant corruption and sinfulness, so by spirit is meant holiness, principally and chiefly ; and it is therein that they must be suitable to him, who shall see God. You must be a holy nation, a holy people ; so he speaks concerning the people of the Jews, whose constitution was as it were a type and model of the kingdom of God, which was afterwards to obtain in the world in a greater lustre and glory, and to be perfected at length into an eternal kingdom, Ye shall be to me a holy people. Exod. 19. 6. So they became suitable to him as a peculiar treasure above all nations : they were a peculiar people to him in this very res-

pect, which certainly none can be who are not born spirit of spirit.

2. It were unsuitable that others should be of this kingdom, to the design and end of its constitution and appointment. We have that expressed in 1 Pet. 2. 9. a place taken from the forementioned, 19th of Exodus, Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people : and they are called for this end and purpose ; “ to shew forth the praises of him who hath called you from darkness to his marvellous light.” This then is a constitution set up and formed on purpose, to be to the praise and glory of God. When our Lord has finished the work of his mediatorial kingdom, and put it out of its imperfect and growing state, into that of consummation, wherein it is to continue and endure always ; he will then come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them who believe, 2 Thes. 1 . 10. But alas ! what were there admirable or glorious in this matter, if men were to be gathered as it were, by a casual hand, into one body and community without making any discrimination ? It were then a work which had nothing glorious in it ; even when this kingdom is rising to its complete state, and perfect maturity to have persons found there, who were never born into it, or had a temper of mind agreeable to it. It might be said in that case, the end was lost, and the design miscarried. And the greater stress is to be laid upon this, for this reason, that this is a second constitution, to have a pure and holy kingdom in this world. The kingdom of nature was pure at first ; there was nothing of iniquity in it ; but there was an apostacy and revolt in it ; a great part made a defection ; the whole race of men. Now this is a design of retrieving the loss, so far as it is possible to be retrieved ; that is, that those angels who fell not should be confirmed ; and among men, who all fell, many should be restored : so that it was manifestly to be seen, that the design was, as if God had said, “ I will have a kingdom which shall hold pure, and holy, and in which there shall be no more mutiny or tumult, no discord and disorder, and nothing of revolt or rebellion shall be known any more.” This being the case, it was plainly his design to have such a constitution as this, for his own eternal praise, and wherein he might be manifest, and his name continue everlastingly glorious. He now forms a people for himself on purpose to be the eternal monuments of his praise. The exigency of the end aimed at in setting up this kingdom, did challenge so much, that it be a kingdom, of them who are born to God, and have a temper suitable to the state they are to come into. Wherefore do we think God did constitute a second kingdom, but

that he would be sure to have all things right and well there, by that time he had brought things to their final result and issue? We may be confident he will make sure work now, and have nothing in this kingdom, but what shall agree with the design and purpose of it, and be homogeneous to it, and all of a piece. And to suppose he should have such a design as this, and suffer himself to be foiled and baffled in it, is a most unreasonable and monstrous supposition.

3. It would be altogether unsuitable to the laws and offices of this kingdom, whether in the present or future state of it. God is to be taken for their God, which is the first and most fundamental of all his laws: "Thou shalt have no other God before me." This is indeed the swearing allegiance to this great King upon their entrance into this kingdom. Who can ever do this who is not born to it? The carnal mind is enmity against God; (cannot endure his government:) for it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. Rom. 8. 7. It is never possible any can join themselves to God as their God, without having their minds spiritualized and refined into such a temper as can agree to him. There will be perpetual tumultuations and regrets against his authority and laws, till this transforming work hath passed upon them. And then afterwards the whole course of such persons walk and deportment, must be a continued course of subjection and obedience. They must bear themselves toward God as their chosen God, and live entirely to him. And sure there needs another spirit than what is natural to man: for they are in all their after course to walk in the Spirit, to worship in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit, to do every thing they do, in the Spirit. How necessary is it, upon this account, to be born spirit of spirit? It is, and must be the eternal work of those who are of this kingdom, to love, and obey, and praise everlastingly. What is a carnal heart to such employment? The laws of this kingdom require that these be the perpetual exercises of those who come into this kingdom. Carnality, should we suppose such a thing in this kingdom, must needs carry with it that enmity, which stands in direct opposition to love; that rebellion, which stands in opposition to obedience; that stupidity, which stands in opposition to praise. The greatness and excellencies which the subjects of this kingdom are eternally to praise, it were altogether impossible, a carnal mind, should look upon, without regretting; that he is so great, to whom they are so little.

4. It were most unsuitable to the grants and privileges of this kingdom. What is to be enjoyed in that kingdom, can never be enjoyed but upon this supposition, that they are born

of the Spirit. Think of the present privileges which are granted to the subjects of this kingdom ;

(1.) They are brought into a state of liberty. He who is king in the kingdom, is not a king over slaves, but a free people ; and indeed their freedom consists in this, that they are so willingly subject. A heathen could say so much, speaking in reference to a kingdom which God governs, according to his apprehensions of it : *In regno nati sumus : Deo servire, regnare est.* We are born in a kingdom, or into a kingdom, so it had been fuller to this purpose. There are none come into this kingdom, without being born into it, or attuned and suited to it. And he supposes the highest privilege of being in this kingdom is, in being subservient to God : “to serve God,” says he ; “that is to reign.” We are kings in this kingdom, rather than subjects, in being subject to him. The apostle James has a magnificent expression, but most just, and not strained ; the law which we are required to obey, he calls the royal law of liberty, chap. 1. 25. And the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, does make us free from the law of sin and death, Rom. 8. 2. The felicity and duty of the subjects in this kingdom herein meet in one and the same point : for whereas it is their duty not to serve sin ; it is their privilege to be exempt from that vile servitude ; and they themselves are brought to resent it as such when once the law of the Spirit of life has made them free. Oh ! what an ease is it to have the yoke thrown off and to find a man’s spirits so disentangled, as to be able to say ; “ I am not restrained, as I have sometimes been, from the love and communion of the blessed God ; I am not depressed and borne down towards the earth as heretofore, when I should ascend and get up in lively affection to heaven. It is a most pleasant thing to feel liberty, and find one’s self set free.” This Spirit by which persons are thus born, makes them free as soon as they are born : Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty ; that is, that Spirit which refines and transforms from glory unto glory : as the connexion lies, 2 Cor. 3. 17, 18. How inconsistent therefore must it needs be with those who remain still in the flesh, for such a one loves the bondage which it is a privilege to be freed from ; and takes pleasure in his chains, and is proud of them. The case is with him as with that servant concerning whom the supposition is made in the law of Moses ; that he should so love his master, as when the time of relaxation came, he would not go free. The gospel of Christ is the ministration of the Spirit, by which souls are begotten unto God ; and whensoever any are by it made sons, they are made free. Therefore we read of this liberty as appropriate to the sons of God ; for we are not to sup-

pose, that God's own sons should be slaves. But the bondage of slaves is preferred by carnal hearts, to the liberty of sons ; and it will be always so till they become sons ; and they will never be sons, till they are born again, and till it can be said of them, there is something produced in them which is spirit born of the Spirit.

(2.) Tranquillity is a great privilege belonging to this kingdom. One who is not thus born of the Spirit hath no seed or principle of peace in himself. To be spiritually minded is life and peace, and this kingdom is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." But they who are still in the flesh, and not born of the Spirit, have that still in their temper and constitution, which is inconsistent with peace ; and which, if we should suppose commonly to obtain in that kingdom, would as much shatter and discompose things there, as we find peace is from time to time disturbed in this lower world. What is it which hath made this world so troublesome a region, but only the carnality of it ? What is it but the lust of men, which occasions the wars and tumults and commotions, which fill the world with noise and blood from age to age ? It would even be so above too, if you should suppose that persons should be generally brought thither, who were not born spirit of spirit.

(3.) Communion with God is the great privilege of the subjects of this kingdom ; in some degree in this present state, and perfectly in the perfect state of that kingdom. But do we think that one who is not born spirit of spirit, will ever care to converse with God eternally and always ? Alas ! how little do they care for it now ! How little do they love the divine presence ! How wearisome a thing is an hour's attendance upon God, in a duty, to a carnal heart ! How would such a one behave himself, to be eternally in that presence, unto which he is so averse ! Would it be a heaven to him ? Indeed there is nothing which hath made hell any where but sin ; and if it were possible that sin could get into heaven, it would create a hell there too.

5. It would be most unsuitable to the community, and all the fellow subjects, if any should come into that kingdom, who were not thus born. It was evidently the design to have them all of a piece, who should have place together, in this kingdom. When that work was designed to be set on foot which was preparatory and fundamental to the perfect and glorious state of this kingdom, it was thought fit that he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, should be all of one : (Heb. 2. 11.) that is, all reduced to conformity to one and the same original. He himself who is the Mediator, is the holy and just One ; these are the characters by which we find him discrimi-

nately mentioned ; and all who are to be gathered to him, must all be one with him in this thing, and he must be the common Sanctifier of them all ; that is, by the Spirit by which they are thus begotten and born ; that so they may agree and be suitable to him. And being so, it is manifest, there must be the same ground and medium of common agreement among all, who should be united to him, if they must all be made to agree to him who is holy, it cannot be but they must all agree to one another, being holy and sanctified ones. Heaven is called the “ inheritance of them who are sanctified ;” and certainly the communion which they are there to have with one another, is to be in the highest and perfect sense, the communion of saints. And it being requisite that there should be an agreement and oneness among all the subjects of this kingdom, this agreement was not to be brought about, considering this kingdom must consist of persons who were unlike, but by reducing them who were fallen from that perfection which originally belonged to their natures, to a conformity to the rest. Therefore you find this said concerning those who are to be adjoined and brought into it, that they thereby actually come unto the general assembly, an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and so constitute and make up the church of the first-born, Heb. 12. 22, 23. You must note that first-born here is of the plural number, and so it signifies a church consisting of first-born ones, and must needs have reference to this same birth here spoken of in the text. It was not otherwise possible, that there should be an agreement or conformity when there was once an unlikeness before, but by reducing some to the rest ; they who were fallen and lapsed from their original excellence, to a conformity to them who stood. And therefore those angels who stood, remain as a standard and pattern, to which all who are afterward to be adjoined to this kingdom, must be made conformable. As soon as they are got into the account of first-born ones, or are the first-fruits of his creatures, (Jam. 1. 18.) the flower and most excellent and noble part of his creation ; they are said to be come to them. The church made up of such, in conjunction with those glorious spirits, the angels who stood, comes to be a uniform church and kingdom. But if they should not be so conformed, it would be prejudicial both to the order and felicity of this kingdom. How both uncomely and uncomfortable a thing, if there should not be this conformity ! How uncomely would it be, that there should be some in this kingdom, rejoicing in the excellency and glory of their eternal King ; and some secretly envying him, and wishing they could tell how to unking him ! How indecorous, when the gene-

ality are engaged in gladsome triumphant songs of praise ; for some to lower and hang the head, and dislike the very thing for which others do give thanks ! And how inconsistent would it be with the felicity of the subjects of that kingdom, that there should be such jars and discord among them ? Certainly it must be, and could not but be a torture and torment to them ; and no doubt every thing of that kind must be excluded heaven, the perfect state of that kingdom. If there should be any one found there, who should have this for his known sense ; that he cannot love God, or like his government ; he cannot be pleased that he is Lord and King, it could not but be a torture unto the rest. When the kingdom is resigned by the Mediator, into the Father's hand, (1 Cor. 15. 24.) and he is to be all in all ; filling every soul with his fulness ; all desires and wills satiating and satisfying themselves in him, in the midst of all these pleasures, it could not but be a tormenting thing, that there should be any who can take no felicity in him ; who dislike his person, and wish him off the throne ; who are offended at the purity of that state, and at that, wherein all the rest do place their common felicity. It would be very uncomely and uncomfortable to have any dissensions in that kingdom ; and therefore it can never be admitted, and is apparently necessary, that whoever comes into it, enter by this new birth.

6. It would be unsuitable to the course and way of government in this kingdom, whether you look upon it in its present, or future or perfect state. Consider the way of government in this present state. Why here God governs in a way somewhat suitable to the methods of government by men ; that is by laws and public edicts, with threats and promises inserted into them ; that men may know what they are to do, and what not ; and what they are to expect by way of reward if they do well, and what by way of punishment, if they do amiss. This course of government is suited to the reasonable nature of man, and does well as it is managed by some men over others ; because they who are to be the governed part, do sensibly perceive how much it is in the power of the governing part, either to do them good or hurt, according as they obey or rebel. So that men's senses are in this case their instructors, of how great concernment it is to conform themselves to the laws ; and how dangerous a thing to attempt the violation of them. But consider how these same methods applied to men for their government, by an invisible Ruler, can signify in this case ; or what their success commonly is. There are as plain proposals of the law of God to men, as any can be by earthly rulers. It is impossible that human laws can be made plainer, than the divine laws are,

in many, and those the most important, cases. The great God promises infinitely greater things than any mortal can promise; and threatens greater things, than they can assume to themselves to do. But what do all these things signify, where men remain still in the flesh? His laws are plain, and his promises very assured, and his threatenings awful and monitory, to them who are once born of the Spirit, and have got somewhat of sense and life about them, and can perceive things which are above the common allay: but for them who yet remain strangers to this birth, and upon whom the Spirit of the living God hath done no such refining work it is plain that such men's hearts take no impressions from the plainest discoveries of his will. When they are warned of the danger of a continued course of sin; they who warn them are like them who mock: and whatsoever they represent from the divine promises of the blessed state of holy and sincere and obedient souls, is all but like a tale which is told. These methods of government, in the present constitution of this kingdom, will not suit those who are not born spirit of spirit, and till that Spirit come forth with that power, and in that operation, by which the souls of men are begotten to spiritual life. In that work itself, and by that work, the divine precepts and promises, and threatenings, come to be successful and effectually applied; but never else, no more than the most express human laws, with the addition of the severest penalties, or promises of the highest rewards, would signify to a multitude of dead men.

And then for the way of government in the future state of this kingdom, and when it arrives to its perfect state; there we must suppose, the way of government should be, by sweet and secret intimations, and internal irradiations upon receptive minds and hearts; such elapses by which hidden sense is conveyed, even in a moment, so as that all the subjects of that kingdom are to obey, as it were, any wink, or nod, or glance of the eye; I mean any such intimations which can as secretly convey the sense of the great Ruler, as they do commonly among us. But how manifest is it that there must be a great refinedness of mind and heart, to receive those gentle touches by which spirits are in a moment to be swayed this way or that. One who is yet a composition of flesh and not born of the Spirit, how incapable is he of these kind impressions; these touches which are to come by so gentle a hand; these so insinuating ways, by which God is to slide into the very spirits of these blessed souls, and prompt them this way or that as he pleases!

7. It were most unsuitable to the unchangeableness and perpetuity of this kingdom, that any should be admitted into it, who are not born into it, or made spiritual as the constitution of it is. We ought in all reason to think, that such a state of things as is designed for perpetuity, and never to be changed, must be most unexceptionably perfect. It were a dismal thought that this kingdom should be at once both eternal, and imperfect: for then if it were imperfect it must be imperfect always; and whatsoever were amiss in this constitution of it, would never be repaired, or altered. This kingdom, though it is in its inchoate estate, yet imperfect, that inchoate state is but its temporary state, which will soon be over: but then there must be even in the very entrance into it, an entrance the right way, otherwise the case will be like an error in the first concoction, which is never cured in the second; that is, it must be by being born spirit of spirit. When any one comes into it, he comes into a kingdom which is to be everlasting; and so whatever there should be of irregularity and imperfection in admitting him into this kingdom, it would be an unalterable thing. Substantially this kingdom can never be altered: grace and glory do not substantially differ. That holiness, which the saints carry the name of such from, while they are here on earth, is not another or a diverse thing, from what must be their eternal character above; it will be of the same kind, only much more perfect. That knowledge of God, and satisfaction in God which is to be enjoyed hereafter, is of the same kind and nature, with what in a more inferior degree, the saints partake of here; and in that lower degree they must be attuned and suited in their very constitution: otherwise there would be a substantial difference, between one member of this kingdom and another; and which were never to be altered, but must last always; because the difference which is to be made between the present and future state of this kingdom, is not substantial, but gradual only. And therefore the apostle argues with so much severity, (Heb. 12.) when he had been speaking of that which is most constituent of this kingdom, "an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect," all making up together one "church of the first-born written in heaven; We having," says he, "received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." You have now the frame and model of this kingdom brought among you, which is never to be shaken; you are to account therefore that God will make thorough work in his setting up this kingdom; that there shall be no flaws or defects to be found, which shall be incapable of remedy and

cure afterwards. He never intends to take this frame of things asunder any more, but that it shall last for ever; and therefore expect him to be a consuming fire about this work; he is not to be dallied with now he hath such a work as this in his hands; therefore look that you carry it acceptably to him, with reverence and godly fear. He will shew himself to be a consuming fire in the managing the work of his kingdom, and the setting and framing that constitution and state of things which he resolved never should be shaken, but should last always. And the very reason of the thing itself doth require that it should be so: for whatever a man designs for a long continuance, he would be most accurately curious about. That which he intends only for a day, he would be little solicitous how it were composed and framed; whether there were such curiosity and similitude of parts, yea or no; but that which he intends to be a lasting and permanent thing, that he would have to be very exact at first. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Do we think that when the blessed God designed a perpetual and unshaken kingdom, he would take that into the constitution of it, by which it would certainly come to be divided against itself; and be disagreeing to itself, as the image or representation of Nebuchadnezzar, which was part brass, part iron, and part clay? Surely this kingdom must be another kind of constitution, and made better to agree with itself, inasmuch as it is designed to be unchangeable and everlasting.

Thus then you have the second thing demonstrated; the necessity of being born of the Spirit in order to the having place in the kingdom of God. It lies in our way here to reflect, that since there are so many full, clear, cogent, and convictive reasons of this truth, that yet there should be so great unaptness and slowness in the spirits of men, to receive so vast a truth as this. Is it not an amazing thing, that whereas truths of another import, as soon as they appear to be such, are presently received, and without any more ado: and if they are understood to concern us, they are commonly received with suitable affections and impressions upon men's minds? If you should tell a man there is an opportunity of an advantageous bargain; if he once comes to believe it to be true, he not only assents to it, but receives it with correspondent impressions on his will, resolutions, and affections; it influences his practice, and he goes and does accordingly. It is a thing most amazing, when we consider how express the affirmation is, and how plain and clear the reasons are; and that if once it be acknowledged a truth, it cannot but be acknowledged a most important truth; that yet we so common-

ly hear of such matters, just as we hear a tale which is told, and as if it were all one to us, whether it were true or false. What would we think necessary to beget an unwavering firm persuasion in our hearts, that such a thing is true? Why certainly the concurrence of testimony and plain reason together, carry as much as our hearts can wish in order to the clearing of whatsoever truth. Here is the express word of the Lord of this kingdom; for it is the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as the kingdom of God; now you will look upon it as the greatest vanity and madness imaginable for any to promise himself an interest and share in the blessedness of that kingdom, against the express word of the Lord of it. Pray, by what right should you come into it, if the Lord and King will not admit you? Or by what power? Where is your right if he deny your right? Where is your power to evade or oppose, if he resist and withstand you? If there were no more in the business, this were enough, he hath spoken it, and ratified it by the seal of his own Amen. Verily, verily I say unto you: I do assever it to you; I assert it to you with all the peremptoriness imaginable. What should become of that man's soul, or what can we think of his persuasion, who is persuaded against the real word of the Lord of this kingdom, that he shall have place in it? The reason of the thing is so convictive and manifest, that nothing can be more. You may as well think of making a composition of light and darkness, fire and water, of the most inconsistent things; as to bring flesh and spirit together into the composition of this kingdom.

SERMON IV.*

THE truth we have in hand is this ;—That there is a work to be done upon all who partake in the kingdom of God, by which they are to be born spirit of spirit.—We have spoken to this doctrinally at large ;—the *Use* of it is now before us. And that which I have first to take notice of, as a reflection which cannot but be of very great and common use, is, that since this is so plain and evident a truth, it is exceeding strange that it should not more commonly and visibly obtain in the belief of those who profess themselves christians. So important a truth believed, could not but infer that, that belief would be visible in the practice; and so evident a truth, one would think, men should not stick to believe. Wherefore there are these two heads, I think might be worth our while to discourse to you —To let you see that it is but too visible this truth is not believed by the generality of professed christians and—to shew the unreasonableness of men's disbelief in reference thereunto.

I. I am to shew that this truth is not believed by the generality of those who call themselves christians. And that I may speak more clearly and distinctly, it will be requisite—to tell you what I mean by their not believing this truth; and then—shew you that men do not believe it.

1. What is intended by this charge upon the generality of persons professing Christianity? Here it will be necessary to

* Preached December 26th, 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

say something to you,—concerning the object, or truth, which is not believed; and—something concerning the nature of that belief which, we complain, is wanting in reference thereunto.

(1.) Concerning the object, it is requisite you understand that we mean this truth taken entirely and so as to comprehend together, the several things which are contained in it. As for instance,—that there is a change necessary to be wrought in the spirits of men—that this change must be so great and entire upon their spirits as to amount to another birth, or being born of the Spirit—that God hath such a work and design in hand, as the constitution of a new kingdom of obedient and happy subjects; such as shall willingly obey, and gladly and joyfully partake and communicate with him in the glory and blessedness of this kingdom, and—that there is no other way of entrance into this kingdom but by being so born and connaturalized thereto. All these things are evidently contained in this doctrine. Now it is constantly acknowledged, when you put some one or other of these things, single to a person, who, it may be, hath never yet admitted a serious thought of it; it is likely he will say, “Yes this is true.” But it doth manifestly appear, that he hath never digested the system and frame of such truths, as they lie together, and do amount to this sum. And indeed that is one great fault in the common faith of persons professing Christianity, that it is a partial faith: they believe this and that particular truth, they will tell you, taken asunder from the rest, but consider such and such truths as they are a part in the general system of Christian truths; and so it is most apparent, that they are not received and taken in. And

(2.) Suppose any have never so distinct thoughts and apprehensions of the truths of the gospel; those in particular which this truth sums up; yet the faith of most who profess the Christian name, it is plain is quite another thing, in the nature of it, than what really and truly, we ought to reckon, the belief of the Christian doctrine. I do not intend, when I say, these things are not believed, that men professing Christianity are arrived to an explicit disbelief, or that they reckon themselves unbelievers, or profess infidelity in this matter; or that there is no such thing as a real assent unto such truths as this. But there is not that assent which according to the strictness of the Scripture notion, we ought to put the name of belief upon; that is, they do not take it upon the authority of the great God, as a thing revealed from heaven to them, that it is necessary they undergo such a transforming change, in their own spirits, in order to their having place in this kingdom, this is not received on the authority of God, and so as accordingly to influence their hearts and practice. Which if it doth not do,

it doth nothing ; and which if it be not apt to do, it is not that faith, which the Scripture intends.

2. This then is that, which we are to make out, from several considerations. As,

(1.) That the Scripture doth commonly attribute, or gives intimation by which we are taught, to attribute the inefficacy of the gospel doctrine, to men's disbelief of it, or their not believing. As that passage of the apostle, wherein he quotes the prophet Isaiah, Rom. 10. 16. They have not all obeyed the gospel, for Esaias saith, Who hath believed our report ? They have not all obeyed ; and why ? Because Isaiah saith, they have not believed. The things which the gospel requires as matter of duty, by the precepts of it, would be comported with, and obeyed, if the truth of them were believed. They are not believed, and how is that demonstrated ? Why they are not obeyed. So we are told of the scoffers who would be in the last days ; and there is nothing in the days in which we live, more scoffed at, than the Spirit, and this work of the Spirit upon the souls of men ; who would walk after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming ? 2. Pet. 3. 4. Because they do not believe the great things contained in the gospel, therefore they scoff, and therefore they indulge themselves in all ungodliness. We are told, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, Rom. 1. 16. Which plainly intimates, that it signifies nothing with them who believe not. With them who believe it is a mighty powerful thing ; but with them who believe it not, it effects nothing : there it is weak and impotent. So again we are told by the apostle, 1 Thes. 2. 13. That these Thessalonians when he first came among them, received the word, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which worketh effectually in them who believe. It hath a most effectual work, where it is believed ; and wheresoever therefore it is ineffectual, and there are no suitable impressions, to be found upon men's spirits, there it is manifest, it is not believed : and 2 Thes. 2. 13. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you brethren ; for God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Which plainly implies, that the truth wherever it is believed, is accompanied with the sanctifying impressions and influences of the Spirit ; and it cannot be understood to be believed, where it is not so. And

(2.) Consider further, that the nature of the thing itself is such, and so nearly and directly concerns, and tends to influence the practice, that it is not possible it can be truly believed, if it is not believed practically. We are to consider a vast difference between such kind of assents, which are conversant

about truths, all the design whereof is compassed and attained, as soon as we have spoken them ; and those which have a further design ; that is, to guide and govern a man's practice, this way or that. Sure it is a far other kind of assent that I am to give, for example, to this truth ; that such a thing is poison and would destroy my life ; such a thing is useful food, and would preserve my life, than if I give to this, that the sun is so many hundred times bigger than the earth. The reason is, that that doth no way concern my practice, and it is no matter how superficial an assent I give it ; but the other are things which concern my practice, and if I do not believe them suitably, and with a practical belief, I might as soon eat the poison as the food. It is incompatible with the nature of these things, that they should be, or can be believed truly, if they are not believed practically ; and so as to influence the heart, and direct the course, so far as that I never satisfy myself with knowing, that men are to be born spirit of spirit ; but drive at this, to be myself so born. Otherwise it is the most manifest thing in all the world, that I turn this great important truth, which most nearly concerns me, to a thing of mere impertinency to myself. Again,

(3.) It is not consistent with the nature of a man, thoroughly to believe a thing to be true, and yet altogether to be unconcerned about it ; supposing the thing in its own nature such as does nearly touch some grand concernment one way or other. There are two things I would remark to you concerning the nature of man ; the one is, that it is capable of having some prospect of what is future : it is not confined to only present things, as it is with the brutal nature. The other is, that it is incapable of being indifferent about happiness and misery. The nature of man is capable of having a prospect of futurity, or somewhat beyond the present time. His rational nature doth in this differ, from a brute creature, that whereas that is confined only to the present, and can have no prospect of what is future ; men, as their own experience may tell them, have a prospect of what is future, and may befall them to-morrow, or the next day, or what may be a year hence, and what they are then to do. They have a foresight of what may be an advantage, or disadvantage to them in future time. But then it is incapable of being indifferent whether things should be well or ill with them, supposing they do indeed believe what they have some prospect of. Suppose you hear such a one intends to kill you to-morrow, and have your blood ; it is inconsistent with the nature of a man to be so far unconcerned, as altogether to be indifferent, whether his life be destroyed to-morrow or no. But according as he believes or disbelieves the report, so he

will be concerned or unconcerned about it. Nothing can be more evident. Wherefore it must necessarily also be, that according as men believe or disbelieve what hath that aspect upon their future eternal states, either that upon such terms, they shall have place in the kingdom of God, or be excluded and shut out for ever; it is altogether impossible, if men do really believe what is said to them concerning these things, that they should be so indifferent, whether they be happy or miserable throughout a vast and immense eternity, as to have no care or concern about the matter. I add

(4.) That the common unconcernedness about such things, is not to be resolved into any thing else, but their unbelief. I shall here more distinctly labour to evince to you these two things,—that men are very generally unconcerned about those things which this truth hath relation to; their spiritual and eternal states, and—that this their unconcernedness is otherwise unaccountable.

[1.] That they are unconcerned is too apparent from sundry considerations: As

First. That they are so little inquisitive, whether this great transforming change, hath passed upon their spirits yea or no. I understand there is a great necessity of being born spirit of spirit: What would more naturally ensue, if this were believed, than to say, Am I so born? Or what is it to be so born? Do I find any specimen or discovery of such a work wrought in myself? While there are so few who ever give themselves the trouble of such inquiries, certainly there is a very great unconcernedness about the matter, and such as doth manifestly bespeak the disbelief that there is, or needs to be any such thing. And

Secondly. That men so easily take the matter for granted and are so easily satisfied. Certainly if there were that deep concern which the exigence and importance of the matter requires, men would not be very easy to admit of satisfaction in the case, and soon and slightly pass it over: and think they have done enough when they have asked the question, though it be answered they cannot tell how. If they have thought it probable, the thought yet would again and again return; But am I sure? Is this to be born spirit of spirit, and am I thus born? They would never think they could be too sure, or that enough could be done to make the matter sure.

Thirdly. That it is a thing so little insisted upon in prayer, among persons who profess the Christian name, that God would give his Spirit for this purpose, at least that the hearts of people so little go out in any such petitions and requests to God. If it should be asked them who allow prayer to have

any place in their practice ; which way do your hearts work most in prayer ? If they were to give an account of the sense of their hearts, would it not be this ; “ Lord, grant me what appears desirable to me in this world ; that I may have my carnal desires satisfied to the full ? ” But who insists with importunity and earnestness, upon this great thing ? “ Lord, whatsoever thou grantest or deniest, grant me thy Spirit : let me be miserable, and reduced to poverty and beggary ; let me wander up and down in the want of all things ; but give me thy Spirit.” Oh ! what loud and importunate cries would there be for the Spirit, if this doctrine were believed ? But God may withhold many things from men much more to their displeasure and dissatisfaction, than his Spirit, and about which they would much more sensibly complain : take away their estates and relations, and they complain and cry for them ; but he may withdraw or withhold his Spirit, and they can go years together, and never complain or feel themselves grieved at it. The very execution of the threatening, does not make them uneasy : “ My Spirit shall not strive ; ” it doth not strive with many from day to day, and year to year ; and yet it doth not make them complain. This is too plain an argument, that it is not believed, that there is a necessity in order to the entering into God’s kingdom, to be born of the Spirit.

[4.] That men are so little in expectation, and no more generally in a waiting posture, for the Spirit when they hear of it. How few are there who are in such expectations, day by day, more than they who wait for the morning ; Oh ! when shall this Spirit come ? When shall the happy hour be of its sensible appearance in my dead and forlorn soul ? When they hear, that the Spirit is as the wind which bloweth where it listeth ; how few are ready to say, Oh ! when shall I find its breathings upon me ? When will it reach me ? When shall I feel some of its powerful influences and refreshing gales ?

[5.] That men are so little afraid of resisting the Spirit, and of giving it offence and provocation ; so as that God should penally retract or withhold it. Certainly if this doctrine were believed, men would be in a very great dread upon this account ; they would tremble to think of the possibility, or danger of giving that distaste by neglects, and resistance, to the spirit of grace, as to make it retire, not knowing whether ever it would return. Again

[6.] That the thoughts of this concernment, do no more mingle with men’s affairs, in which they employ themselves here under the sun ; and not more check their too impetuous pursuit of their worldly designs, which their hearts are so ever intent upon. If this doctrine were indeed believed, it

could not surely be, but that many times in the midst of secular business, such thoughts would come in ; But am I yet born of the Spirit ? All that I do is mere idle trifling impertinency when I do not yet know, whether I am so much as alive, in order to heaven and God's kingdom, and the eternal state which is before me. How seldom throughout the day, can any such thoughts be crowded into the minds of men ? surely it would be a great check to the heat of their pursuits after the things of the world, if such thoughts did but now and then strike in ; and they could not but strike in often, if the matter were indeed thoroughly believed ; " I must be so born into heaven, or buried in all the darkness and misery of hell for ever."

[7.] If men were so concerned about this matter as the thorough belief of it, one would think, should infer ; such thoughts must needs be a very great alloy to the pleasure and sweetness of their sensual enjoyments. When they are relaxing themselves to pleasure, and allowing themselves the liberty of excursions, into this or that kind of sensual delight ; certainly they could not so freely enjoy the creatures themselves, if it were considered ; " I am yet at a very great uncertainty whether the divine life hath any place in my soul or no : whether the great work of the new creation, hath any, so much as the least beginnings in me ?" Alas, what an infusion would this be of gall and wormwood, of bitterness and death, into whatsoever sensual delights, which would utterly spoil the sweetness of them ; if it were believed that it is necessary to be thus born ; and yet that it is uncertain whether we are thus born !

(2.) And pray then, what can we resolve this unconcernedness into, which is the other thing under this head ; but their disbelief, and that they want a thorough persuasion of this truth, that I must be so born , or perish ? For think of what else we would resolve it into : Is it the obscurity of the matter, and that it is merely an unintelligible thing ? But why is this unintelligible, that there is a work necessary to be wrought upon the spirits of men by the Spirit of God, to render them suitable to God, and capable of blessedness in him ? Indeed what can we think of that is plainer, if we consider the common state of men, and the present temper of their spirits ? and how apparently necessary it is ; that their spirits must be of another temper, in order to their being happy ; and that there is nothing to be done in this kind, but by a proportionable cause ; and that such an effect doth manifestly challenge to be wrought by such a cause ? They are to be changed by the dispensation of the gospel from glory unto glory ; where the progressive work

is spoken of, of the same nature and kind with that whereof we are speaking; even as by the Spirit of the Lord, (2 Cor. 3. 18.) that *as* does not signify similitude but identity: the work must be such as may plainly and evidently speak its own author; or so as that it may be peremptorily concluded,—this is a work so very agreeable to the Spirit of God, that nothing but the Spirit of God could have done it. Now the Spirit of God hath wrought like itself, and worthy of itself; and what it, and it only could do. It is true indeed that the nature of the work, and all the several parts of it, and the way of working, may be very much unknown things to persons as yet unexperienced. But that there is such a work necessary to be done, by which the spirits of men are to be changed, and that the Spirit of God only can do it, I know nothing can be pretended more intelligible than this; or why, at least, it should with any tolerable, or colourable pretence be said to be an unintelligible thing. It is not because men cannot understand this, but because they have no mind to believe it and admit the truth about it into their hearts, that they are so little willing of. Or is it, that the thing is inconsiderable, and not worthy of their regard? No man who hath not abjured his understanding, can have the face to say so. What can concern me more, than whether I have a station in God's kingdom, or not; where the state is such as includes and comprehends the whole of that felicity and blessedness, which an intelligent nature is capable of, and being excluded that kingdom, is to be excluded blessedness, and left a miserable creature for ever? Certainly no man who hath not abandoned man, and put off himself, but must acknowledge this to be the greatest concernment to him of all others; and that therefore he is not unmoved and unaffected, with this matter, because he thinks it inconsiderable and not worth his regard. The business therefore still returns hither, that it is not believed: men will not believe it, and therefore they are not concerned.

Thus far you see, that there is too plain evidence that this doctrine is not believed. The next thing would be to shew the unreasonableness of this disbelief. It might well astonish our hearts to think what there is of malignity and horror, in this belief among them who professedly own, that this revelation is from God; but yet, it is manifest, all the while, that they do not believe it: or that ever it should enter into the heart of a creature capable of understanding its own rise and original from the ever blessed God, to doubt or dispute, or deny so plain and manifest a revelation from him as this. The case arrives to this state, and we cannot give it a more favourable one, as if such a person should say to the great God, the Lord

of heaven and earth, "I take thee to have spoken by thy own Son, such and such words to men, but I do not believe them." This it plainly comes to. He hath said, that men must be born again, or they can never come into the kingdom of God; and if such persons would say, what is in their hearts, they must say too; We do not believe it. The matter comes to a direct and flat contradiction, a practical one, and which is more and worse than a verbal one, between them and the great Lord and Founder of this kingdom: as if they better knew the mind of God in this matter, than his own Son, who came out of his bosom; or better understood, who were to be of God's kingdom, and who not, than he into whose hands the management of all the affairs of this kingdom is put. Certainly when this matter comes to be discussed we shall find it impossible to pitch upon any thing in our own thoughts which carries more of monstrosity and horror in it, than the disbelief of such a truth.

SERMON V.*

WE have insisted upon this subject doctrinally at large, and made some entrance upon the use. That which we have, in the first place, inferred, is ; That this being so evident and important a truth, it is very strange, it should not be more generally believed among christians, than apparently it is. We have shewed that generally it is not believed, in the last exercise ; and are now to shew

II. The great unreasonableness and perversity of this disbelief in reference to this great important truth. We insist the longer and more distinctly upon this use, because it is the use which our Lord himself makes of his discourse, upon this subject, as you may see in the 11th and 12th verses, which I shall have occasion to consider and open afterwards. The great unreasonableness of not believing this truth will appear, if you consider—how much is to be said for it and—how very little and insignificant any thing is, which can be said against it.

1. Consider how much is to be said for it, and hath in part been said. As much surely as any considering person would think necessary to recommend a thing to his belief which he did not know before. I would appeal to men, what would they expect ? Or what condition would they require any such thing to be qualified with, which they would think to be a competently credible object of their belief ? What would they

* Preached January 9th, 1677. Cordwainer's Hall.

say is necessary? What suppositions would they make? If you had a voice from heaven, or an angel sent to you on purpose; or if Christ himself should appear, and speak these words to you, as he did to Nicodemus; then you would believe? Even they who say so would soon find, if God should make such trials with them, it would be to as little purpose, as to clothe it with the evidence wherewith he doth recommend it. For you see though our Lord himself did speak these things to Nicodemus, yet he hath cause to complain of infidelity still. But what, Is not a thing sufficiently credible without such a recommendation as this? Or is it not a most unreasonable extravagance to say, "Except ourselves, with our own eyes, see signs and wonders we will not believe?" What have you a vision and voice for every thing you believe which you do not see with your own eyes? Let it be considered what we have to assure us of this great truth.

(1.) We have the plain reasonableness of the thing itself: which will appear by laying together these several considerations.

[1.] That the kingdom of God imports a state of perfect felicity in the highest notion of that kingdom; or a state of preparation thereto, or gradual tendency thither-ward, in the first or lower notion of it. This is a thing plain and obvious to all our thoughts, that the kingdom of God imports a state of persons either perfectly happy already; or else tending to a state of happiness.

[2.] Consider that such who are no way within the compass of this kingdom, are not happy as yet. Look upon any man in his natural state, and any one will soon acknowledge, I am not happy as yet. I appeal to your own senses, and to the common sense of men, can you say, you are already happy? What do you know no wants? No desires? I wish it were better with me than it is? A plain indication to every man's sense, that he is not happy as yet. And

[3.] That it is not in the power of all this world to make men happy. He who enjoys never so much of it, it is not a little more will make him happy; for it is manifest an additional degree of a good of the same kind, will not do it; it must be a good of another kind. They who have most of this world, have they never thought themselves unhappy, or pronounced so concerning their present state *Ante obitum nemo &c.* Pagan light hath seen so much, that in this life no one can be happy; who have known how to make their best of this world, as well as any of us. Besides it is in the reason of the thing manifest, that no man can be happy, as long as he knows himself to be mortal. There is a gloomy thing called death still hanging

over my head, and it will light upon me one time or other. Can any man be happy as long as the case is so, and while he hath no comfortable expectation of any thing better hereafter? Men are a little pleased sometimes, while they can forget dying. But what is all that happiness which depends only upon a man's forgetfulness; that is, which is capable of being undone and blasted by a thought? That is a pitiful happiness, which a thought can destroy and blow away. Such only is that happiness which this world affords, and which can grow up out of this earth. I conclude therefore, that nothing can be more evident to the common sense and experience of all men; than that as they are not yet happy, so they cannot be, by any thing this world can give them.

[4.] That they cannot be happy in God without having their spirits changed, and made suitable to him. It puts an equal impossibility in the way of my happiness, whether, either my spirit be suitable to such or such a thing, and it hath not enough in it to make me happy; or that such another thing hath enough in it to make me happy, but my spirit is not suitable to it. As it is in reference to the matter of nourishment; neither can that nourish which doth not afford fit matter, or suitable aliment to a man's body; nor doth that which is never so suitable nourish if it cannot be received, or there is an aversion and dislike to it. A stone cannot nourish, because it is not fit aliment; and the best food cannot nourish, if the appetite is averse and disaffected to it. That person who can think of God with no pleasure, takes no complacency in him; and who bears towards him, not only a cold, but an averse and disaffected heart can never be happy in God. And such is every one who is as yet only born flesh of flesh, for the carnal mind is enmity to God; and they who are after the flesh, do savour only the things of the flesh.

[5.] That men cannot change their own hearts, so as to temper them to God, and make them suitable to him, and capable of his converse, and of being blessed in him. This must also be evident to every man's conscience, who doth but reflect and commune a little with himself. If any man say, I can change the temper of my own soul; it is true it doth not love God, and take a present felicity in him, but I can alter it and bring it to that pass: any one who will say so, must be the most self condemned creature in all the world. Canst thou turn and change thy own heart, and wilt let it go as it is, averse and disaffected to God, one moment longer? If they can work that change themselves, they are utterly inexcusable that they do not do it out of hand. But if they cannot, as whosoever will go into that trial, will soon find; then in the

[6.] Place, God must do it, or it can never be done; and this is that begetting spirit of spirit, which we speak of, as necessary to a man's coming into the kingdom of God, or being happy. And these considerations laid together, make it apparently reasonable in itself, unto any man who will allow himself to consider, that such a work must be done, in order to such an end. Now how perverse a thing is it to disbelieve and reject so plain a truth, which will not admit of debate? If a man bring the matter to a serious scrutiny, and will but reasonably consider it, he must yield the cause, as soon as he begins to think of it.

(2.) Add thereto, the authority of the Revealer, which ought to silence our spirits, and bring them to a compliance with the revelation, though the thing were not evident, and we had much to say against it. And here we have a twofold revealer, to consider, and speak briefly of; that is—the subordinate, and secondary revealer, namely, the evangelist—and the primary and first Revealer; our Lord Jesus himself. If there is any doubt in the case, it must be concerning the one or the other of these; either that this holy inspired man did not truly report to us Christ's words, and that he tells us Christ said what he never said; or else that our Lord Jesus himself did not say truly, in what he said. As to the

[1.] Why should we think that this blessed man, should write down such words as these in his gospel as spoken by Christ, if he had not spoke them? If any man would think this matter is not to be believed upon that account; it doth manifestly appear, if we would think no better of him, by the general strain and tenour of his writing, that he writes like a rational man; and then supposing him a rational intelligent man, it cannot but be supposed, that he must have some design or other, in whatsoever he did set down. Now what can any man think his design should be, to say, that our Lord said such words as these, if he did not say them? You would easily suppose that John being by his calling and office a disciple and apostle of Christ, that he must needs think himself, upon that account, concerned and engaged to promote that interest, which he had now espoused, and to propagate to the utmost, the Christian name and profession. We cannot in reason but suppose him to be very intent upon this. If he were so, and would disguise and palliate things, and represent them otherwise than they were; surely he would have misrepresented them to the advantage of his cause with men, and not to the disadvantage. If we could allow ourselves to suspect; as we who are christians cannot, though it is possible that such disallowed thoughts may sometimes start up in our

minds ; that he would disguise or misrepresent any thing ; we must suppose that he would do it, so as to make the profession and cause, which he had undertaken, look more plausibly, and be more alluring and inviting, and fit to draw multitudes, to embrace the Christian profession as he had done. But would any man who had such a design as this, if he would misrepresent things, offer to put such devised things in those records which he was to transmit up and down the world, and from age to age ; as he could not but know would be universally disrelished ; and than which it was impossible that any thing could be more ungrateful to the spirits of men, or more opposite to their lusts and interests ? What to tell men that they must undergo a new birth, and must be born spirit of spirit, be refined into a certain sort of spiritual beings by the work of God upon them ; or else they can never come into the kingdom of God ? Certainly if he would disguise, and misrepresent, he would not have done it on that hand ; he would have done it rather on the other, by indulging and complying with the prejudices and lusts and interests of men. There remains not therefore any colour for an imagination, that he should tell us, our Lord spake such words as these, if he did not. And there can be less pretence in the

[2.] Place, to think or imagine, that our Lord Jesus Christ, did speak these words, but that he misrepresented the matter, and did not speak the thing as it was. For what can be supposed ? that he did not know his own power, or that he did not know his own mind ? He who is appointed the great Lord of this kingdom, the very Founder of the constitution, and who is to gather and bring in all to it whoever shall come into it ; did he not know upon what terms men could be brought into the compass of God's kingdom ? Or was it to be supposed possible that any should intrude, and maintain their intrusion into this kingdom, against him and the supreme power which he hath in it ? Briefly consider, either he must be deceived himself or have a design to deceive us. Why, what should that aim at ? With what purpose and intent ? What was to be got by it ? What end could be served ? If it could consist with his nature, with whom guile was never found ; yet certainly it never could with his design : we cannot suppose any by-design he should aim at ; and with his great and main design, it holds no agreement either way. But with what horror should men's infidelity be thought of, when it doth even in the very substance of the thing, cast such reproaches as these upon our great Lord ? What is infidelity in reference to any gospel truth, but a dissent that this is true ; and so it is saying, that it is not true, when he saith, it is ; and opposing our sense to his plain and express word.

This is the complaint our Lord makes in this case ; We testify the things we have known ; As if he should say : “ I speak upon knowledge ; I understand all these things very well, they all lie before me, and within my prospect. I testify what I see, and is under my own eye ; and ye will not receive our witness. If I speak to you of earthly things, and you will not believe ;” (that is, in respect of the manner of their presentation, not the matter represented. It was not the matter ultimately represented, but mediately. He speaks with reference to a known custom among the Jews of baptizing their proselytes : the proselytes of justice, were constantly admitted by baptism among them ; and then forsook father and mother, and all their former natural relations, and came into new relations throughout. Other usages belonging to the Jewish constitution, are called in Scripture by the suitable names of worldly and carnal things, like this expression here, of earthly things. ‘ I speak to you of what these earthly things, which are in use among yourselves, do signify ; and yet, you do not believe me ; you will not take in what I say, when I go so familiarly to work with you, only to shew you the meaning of your own practice, and what is done among yourselves ;’) “ how shall you believe when I come to tell you of heavenly things ; which have no dependance upon, or relation to such usages among yourselves ; as the Son of Man’s descent from heaven, and ascent into it again ; and his being on earth and in heaven at the same time ?” as his words afterwards are. “ What do you make of this, when you will not believe me opening to you so plain and obvious a rudiment of religion, that men must undergo a change in the temper of their spirits, signified by the practice, which is common and usual among yourselves, of baptizing them ; as if they were born into a new world, who come to be proselytes of your religion ?” It is therefore upon the whole matter a thing full of horror, and which ought to make our hearts to tremble to think that such infidelity should lurk in the spirits of men who call themselves christians, in reference to so great and unquestionable things of Christianity ; and that it should admit of any debate. Such expostulations we find used by our Lord elsewhere : “ I come to you,” saith he, “ in my Father’s name, and you will not believe me.” Monstrous partiality and disaffection of men’s hearts, to divine truths, even because they are truth, and because they are divine ! So our Lord expressly speaks : Because I tell you the truth, you will not believe me, John 8. 45. As if it were truth as truth, which was hated by men ; and which they therefore cannot endure, because it is true. And when we consider too, that to believe a divine truth with a divine faith, is a great piece of homage

which we pay to the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth, the first and eternal truth, into whose veracity the whole matter is resolved. That is, the thing is therefore certainly true and credible, and to be believed as true; because it comes from the first and eternal truth, and is a derivation or beam of light, from that original light. It is the homage of a reasonable creature to the Author of his being, to have his soul overwrought and swayed, by the authority of his word. Because he hath said it, I yield and submit; I dare not but own it as true, and believe it as true. And then what an affront must it be on the other hand, to the great and eternal God, when such truths as these so plainly proposed to us in his word, are by infidelity excluded and shut out of our hearts! The authority of his word does not prevail to weigh and sink them down into our souls; but they hover on the surface, and we entertain them with a notional opinion, as true; but in the mean time, exclude them out of our hearts as false. For there it is that infidelity hath its seat, as faith hath its seat there; With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Rom. 10. 10. That assent is not worthy the name of faith which doth not enter into and possess and command a man's soul. Then it is indeed that a truth is entertained with a divine faith, when the thing revealed is received not as the word of man, but as the word of God. This comes from the eternal God, I take it upon the authority of his word; and hence it comes to be urged upon a man's heart, and to impress its own stamp and likeness there. This is the believing any thing with a divine faith. So that indeed this truth, of the necessity of a man's being born spirit; that is, who do then come to be born spirit, at that very time; it doth in this way insinuate, and get into them; not by violence, or offering force to human nature; we are to imagine no such thing; but it doth by a plain and evident discovery of the truth, slide into it, and through it, notwithstanding all the prejudices which obstruct and shut up the heart of man; and so creates that faith, by which men believe unto righteousness and blessedness. And therefore it is plainly said, They who are of God do hear God's words. John 8. 47. Their hearing doth include believing: Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. The expression there, to be of God, is only a short elliptical expression, for being born or begotten of him. You therefore receive not his words because you are not born of God; therefore his word doth not enter into you, and has no place in you. And certainly it ought to fill our souls with deep resentments, to think that there should be such an obstruction in the hearts of men towards God; that a discovery

about such an important matter, coming with so much evidence from him, and upon his authority, cannot be believed ; when men do so ordinarily and easily believe one another, about matters wherein they take themselves to be very much concerned.

Thus much then is to be said for it ; as to the little which can be said against it, see the close of the foregoing discourse. This is the first use of this truth, I should proceed to the rest, &c.



X

SERMON VI.*

WE have at large opened the words, and made some progress in the use. We have inferred from hence, how strange it is that so plain and important a doctrine as this cannot obtain to be believed: that we insisted somewhat largely upon. We proceed to another inference,—that it is evident the design of regeneration is to prepare and fit men to be of God's kingdom.—This is that which he hath in his eye and aim, when he begets souls by his own Spirit in a holy spirituality, suitable to the productive cause. It is very becoming a reasonable creature when he observes some great work is to be done, and there is great apparatus for the doing of it, to inquire, What doth all this mean? What is all this for? We are plainly told, that such a work as this is to be done upon men, as begetting them anew; we see great preparations are made for it; the gospel sent down from heaven on purpose; an office constituted and set up to dispense it; time sanctified and made sacred; solemn ordinances appointed, a frame of worship instituted. It would certainly be great inadvertency not to consider within ourselves, What is all this for? Why all this is for regenerating men first; and what is that for? Why to bring them into God's kingdom. I doubt it is not seriously considered as it

* Preached January 16th, 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

ought to be, how great a design this is, and how intent the blessed God appears upon it, by begetting men of the Spirit, to form them for his kingdom. And from hence arrives several subordinate instructions. As

I. That when a man comes to be regenerate, he is born to very great things. If God hath given us to understand so much of his design, that it is on purpose, and in order to the iustating them into his kingdom, that he hath begotten them spirit of spirit; certainly it is a very great and glorious estate, that every regenerate person is born to. We commonly measure our judgments concerning the fortunes of this or that person by his birth: we say concerning the son of a rich or great man, of a nobleman or prince; that he is born an heir to great and ample possessions, and will certainly be a possessor of them; though there are many things intervening which may cut off a person born to great things from ever being the possessor of them. But here the ease is sure, and not liable to contingences, which can infer frustration and disappointment. It is very unreasonable all this while that we so little consider this, and have so mean low thoughts of the business of regeneration, or regenerate persons: certainly they ought to appear very venerable persons in our eyes. Here is one, as it is meet for us to judge, who is born of God, spirit of spirit; a refined being is begotten in him, which entitles him to eternal glory, an everlasting kingdom. Indeed it is not strange that such persons are obscure unto the most of the world: The world is said not to know God's sons: "What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God?" that is, made such; for God's calling, is making them, what he calls them. He calls things which are not, and makes them existent things. It is subjoined, Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew not him, 1 John 3. 1. There is a heavenly progeny among them, whom the world do not know; but though the world do not know God's sons, methinks, they should know one another, and not think so meanly of one another's state and condition as the rest of the world think of them. It is a most emphatical scripture, 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4. Being begotten again to a lively hope—unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. A regenerate person is no mean person, if you consider his great parentage and high extraction; or the inheritance to which he is born, and the high and glorious hopes which are before him.

II. This instruction also proceeds hence, that we are to look upon it as a very unbecoming thing, when we regret what God further doth, in the prosecution of this design. He hav-

ing begotten persons on purpose for his kingdom, and to partake of the glory and blessedness of its consummate state, doth gradually, as he hath prepared and adapted them for it, translate and take up into that kingdom, such as were before born into it, and begotten to it. It is unreasonable to regret this, whether we ourselves are the spectators only; or whether we also come to be the subjects of this dispensation.

When we are spectators of it as to others, and see him transsuming and taking up some out of this lower state of his kingdom, into the more glorious state of it, whom he hath begotten thereto before; why are we to regret this? What, that God should have the disposing of his own children, whom he hath begotten, as the Father of spirits, spirit of spirit? Indeed whatsoever there is of displeasure towards us in such dispensations, ought to be considered and entertained by us, with a due sense of it; but what there is of divine good pleasure expressed in it, ought also to be submitted to with an awful and complacential subjection. How unreasonable a thing is it, that we should grudge him his own children whom he hath begotten? We should think it very hard, if we dispose of any child of ours in sickness to be nursed abroad, and we cannot have it home without a quarrel when we think fit to have it home.

And how unworthy is it when men regret to be the subjects of this dispensation of God; and cannot endure the thoughts of going into his kingdom, the most perfect and glorious state of it, unto which if they are regenerate, they were born? What, to be unwilling to go to our own Father, and have our spirits return to him, when he hath begotten them for himself? How vile a thing is this! What terrene, dunghill hearts are ours which so cleave to this vile earth? We should think it a most unnatural thing in a son, who has been long in a foreign country, especially if in straits and wants there; and who is not so as to spiritual concerns? and yet should regret to be called home by his father: for that would carry this signification with it, that he counts any miseries more tolerable than his father's presence. Certainly it must needs speak what is very unlike and unworthy of a child. I know not what we can have to say for ourselves, that there should be so few unfeigned desires, after our Father's house and our own home; and when we say, we belong to his family, and have been born into it, and begotten of him; that yet we never care to come there. Still a little longer, a little longer, we would be here below, in this mean and abject state; as though we were contented to endure any thing of misery and calamity and turmoil, and all the impurity of this world; rather than be at home.

with our own Father. There is an aptness to regret God's known purpose ; we struggle and shrink at the thoughts of dying : but certainly that must argue a very great distemper of mind ; for what, would we not have the end attained ; would we have the design defeated and blasted, for which we were born ? if we were ever born spirit of spirit, the design of it was to prepare us for that kingdom into which we regret to go ; we were born on purpose for it, and yet we would not come there.

III. We further learn this instruction hence, that it is a most highly becoming thing for the regenerate, very much to mind that state for which they have been born. No one is wont to be blamed for minding things no higher than what he was born to. Many times we reckon it a piece of unwarrantable and unbecoming arrogance among men, when they aspire to things beyond their sphere and compass, and aim at things above their birth : but a christian is not to be blamed, when he aspires to immortality and eternal glory, and all the felicity and blessedness of God's kingdom above ; for it is that he is born to. It is justly blamed when the spirits of any are found visibly to sink below their birth and state to which they were born, and the grandeur of their families ; when men born of noble parentage, who have that which they call generous blood running in their veins, do mind only mean things, and discover themselves to be of abject ungenerous spirits ; this is reckoned a great incongruity among men. And certainly there is nothing more unbecoming than that a christian should mind and be intent upon things which are of a mean and base allay, and forget the kingdom he was born to. We may aspire high ; our birth and state will justify us in it ; for we are born of God, and born to a kingdom. Why, to let our thoughts grovel, and our affections be scattered in the dust of the earth, to embrace dunghills ; we have nothing whereto to impute it, but an ignoble and mean temper of spirit ; which certainly when we know, and can reflect upon, it should be far from us to allow ; and wherein we find ourselves guilty, we should lay our hands upon our mouth, for it is unaccountable, and nothing is to be said. See how the persons are described whom God sorts out and distinguishes from the rest of men, for eternal blessedness Rom. 2. 6. It is said that God will judge every man according to his works. God is represented there in the person of a judge, and as undertaking the work of judgment upon all this world ; and the world accordingly is divided into two parts, as the judgment of God finds them, and will distinguish them ; that is, they are distinguished by their final states. There are some who are for life, as that which by the determination of

the judge belongs to them ; and others are for indignation and wrath, and tribulation and anguish. These are distinguished by their spirits, or present characters, in order to that final partition of them. These are "such who by patient continuance in all well doing, do seek honour and glory and immortality." This is the character of their spirits ; and to such when God will render to every one according to his works, he will render eternal life. The other sort are described by their character in reference to their state ; that is "who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness ; to them he will render indignation and wrath," &c. To them who are contentious : it is plain enough, if we consider the scope and current of the apostle's discourse, what he means by being contentious here. If you consider it in opposition to what is subjoined, who do not obey the truth ; or by way of collation with what he had been saying in the foregoing chapter ; "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men : " it is plain the truth which he speaks of all along in that discourse is practical truth ; or the truth by which they should be governed in their practice, and according to which they ought to square and conduct their course. It is very plain the contention he means, is a contention against such truth ; when men's spirits resist and withstand the tendency and design and dictates of it, the practical and governing dictates which do more or less obtain in all ; some even in the pagan world, and those which are more clear in the gospel ; but somewhat or other of practical truth there is in all. And this is that which is the common character of those, who shall finally perish ; who are contentious against that truth which should have governed them ; and when it should have been as on a throne in their souls, is shut up as in a prison. They held it in unrighteousness, and fettered it in chains, and pent it up, and confined it only to the notion of the mind ; let it hover only in dark ineffectual notions, and never admitted it to walk forth into their lives and practices ; and have that inspection and power there which it ought to have had. And that practical truth is resisted in nothing more than in this, when men addict themselves in defiance of it, to things which their own reason and experience tell them, are not proportionable to them ; to earthly, terrene things, which they cannot but know are not commensurate, to intelligent and immortal spirits.

They who are of such abject mean spirits, the Lord will be ashamed at last, to be called their God. Heb. 11. 16. But now they seek a better country, that is, a heavenly ; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. These are a sort of persons who approve themselves his children, and evi-

dence of whom they are born ; the temper of their minds, and the course and drift of their designs, shew of what Father they are descended. They mind and seek a better country, wherefore he is not ashamed to be called their God : "These are my own race ; they are suitable to me." But it is a very sad and dreadful intimation to those who are of mean, base and earthly spirits : He will be ashamed to be called their God : "These are no children of mine ; they were never born of my Spirit : I never had any such children."

IV. We further learn, that we are to consider them as most miserable creatures, who are not regenerate. Whosoever are for God's kingdom are regenerated on purpose to prepare them for it. They therefore who are not regenerate, want the radical, fundamental preparation ; the *primordia*, or first principles by which they are to be adopted to that kingdom : and have, in the very temper and frame of their spirits, their doom ; there is this to be read concerning their states, that they are not for the kingdom of God. Men are entered into this kingdom here by regeneration, or being born into it ; and so growing up here, are transplanted into the eternal, glorious kingdom. Now it is a most miserable ease that there is but one inlet or way into the kingdom of God, and men should not be in that way, or so much as about it, or apprehend they have any concern to be so ; as the case is with too many, even the generality of those who are unregenerate. But then what is their hope, or what can it be ? Do they think to leap over this initial state of God's kingdom, and get into the kingdom of glory without ever coming into the kingdom of grace ? How strange a disappointment must they needs find at last ! For they are to consider that this country is the only prolific country ; they are not new born in heaven ; there they are perfected, not begotten. As there are none who become first wicked in hell ; they are there most wicked, or wicked to the utmost ; but they were first wicked here on earth ; why so it is in reference to heaven too ; here men must first be spiritual and holy, and born of the Spirit ; and become most spiritual and holy, when they are most blessed above. And therefore they are certainly in a most miserable case, who since regeneration is designed as the preparation finally and ultimately for heaven, and for this eternal, glorious kingdom ; are neither regenerate, nor apprehensive of any concern they have to be so.

V. We learn, that as the misery of the unregenerate is justly said to be great ; so their folly may be concluded to be no way inferior to their misery. They are as foolish as they are miserable, that is, they speak and think and reckon upon it, that it shall be well with them hereafter, though they are

never regenerate; they fortify their own hearts into a confidence, that they shall attain things which they were never born to, and have no other reason to expect. You would think it a great piece of madness, for a man to go about and say, that he expects a kingdom, and doubts not but he shall be a great prince; though he walks up and down in rags, and is ~~only~~ the son of a ploughman or some mean person: he would be thought fit to live in chains. Why, you will certainly say, 'The expectations of all unregenerate persons, to be hereafter happy in God's kingdom, do not carry this folly in it. Yea, it carries in it much greater folly; for we cannot say, it is impossible that a person of a very mean parentage, should come to greatness in this world. Histories of former and latter times, give us some instances of this kind; but you would think him a madman for all that, who should say so. As certainly he would be truly counted so, who should hope for every thing which is possible, merely because it is possible; as he would be who feared every thing which is merely possible to come to pass that is hurtful and evil to him; as if a man should fear that every bit of meat he eats should choke him; or that in his ordinary walks in the streets, a tile should fall and beat out his brains. Thousands of such accidents are not impossible; but if a man should fear them continually, it were certainly a great folly, and would put a great deal of misery into his life. It would be equally an absurd thing, to hope every thing which is possible, only because it is possible, and no more; but then to hope for that which is simply and absolutely impossible, and which the shortest and quickest turn of thought would convince a man is so; is a madness beyond all imagination. If you hear a man walking in the streets in rags, and saying, "I hope at some time to be a prince or great monarch before I die;" you cannot say, he hopes for an impossible thing: But if you hear an unregenerate man say, "I hope I shall have the eternal kingdom, though I continue unregenerate, and die just as I am;" his hope is simply impossible; for there is an inconsistency even in the temper of his spirit, with the purity and felicity of that kingdom; besides the irreversible determination of the righteous and supreme Lord of it, and the Disposer of all the concerns of it. This is therefore the strongest piece of folly, which ever had place in any human breast, that a man should be yet unborn of God, and never reckon upon being other than he is; and yet expect a place in God's kingdom.

I proceed now to the third inference,—That it is a most wonderful mercy, that any such work as this should be done among the children of men, as begetting them spirit of spirit, in order to their coming into his kingdom.—This is a mercy for

ever to be had in admiration, and which we can never enough adore, if we allow our thoughts to work a little upon the following considerations.

I. The subject of it, or who they are who are thus born. Why, the most undeserving creatures ; for alas ! what can they pretend to deserve who are by nature children of wrath, and exposed from their birth, to his displeasure ? and altogether uninclined either to desire or comply with that by which such a work as this was to be wrought upon them : who were uninclined so much as to desire, "Oh that the transforming power of the Holy Ghost might come upon me !" or disposed to fall in with the motions of the Spirit in order to it ? And besides, what a wonderful mercy was it that ever such impure creatures should be dealt withal, in such a way ? How would any of us like to have that for our employment to touch the ulcerous sores of some poor wretch lying in rags upon a dunghill, in order to the cure of them ? Yea, and most disaffected and opposite to the work, and the worker of it, full of enmity, and apt to strive and contend, and rebel, against the blessed Spirit of God, whenever he comes to touch upon their hearts, in order to such a work as this.

II. The Author of the work, the blessed Spirit. What a wonderful mercy is it that the Spirit should ever come down amongst men, upon such a design ; and become inclined and engaged to diffuse its life and vital influence, in a world lost in carnality and death ? This appears if you consider either its purity, and that the Spirit of holiness should come with such a design, into so impure hearts : or its high and excellent dignity ; if such a work as this could have been done by the hand of man ; or it would have sufficed to have sent an angel, it had been less wonderful : but that the Spirit should come, and come on purpose ; as though he had said, "I myself will immediately attend this affair, it shall be my own doing ; no other hand is proportionable." How highly hath he merited to be called the Spirit of grace ! When the malignity of men's hearts against it is intended to be represented and aggravated, it is said, they have done despite to the Spirit of grace, (Heb. 10. 29.) the Spirit of all love and goodness and benignity and sweetness. Certainly we have reason to call it the Spirit of grace, and to account and reckon it so, who came among men upon such an errand as this. Or again,

III. The nature of this work. Why, it is begetting men, and what does that import ? It imports directly a total change, or a change throughout ; and it imports by consequence a resulting relation. They who are begotten, become children to him who begets. What a mercy was this that such a thing

should be undertaken, as a total change, and that every part should be made new? If some little alteration would have served the turn, the Spirit of God might easily be supposed to be contented to do it; but to make them new throughout, and in every part, which begetting signifies; why the greatness of the undertaking speaks the mercifulness of the undertaker. And besides there is the relation which results and is consequentially imported in it. The blessed God might thus have reasoned off the design; "What, shall I beget them; then must I be their Father: and what, to have such miscreants as they, my children? Why should I beget them by my Spirit, and become a Father to them, who are already of their father the devil? shall I go to make the devil's children mine?"

IV. The end, which is to bring them at last into his own kingdom. It is a wonderful mercy, that they who are altogether born in sin, and born under wrath and ruin, should have such thoughts taken up about them; and the holy and eternal Spirit employed on purpose, to beget them anew, and form them throughout; and bring them into the presence of his glory, to dwell with him and reign with him for ever. They so partake in this kingdom, as to be kings in it, "He washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." What a wonderful mercy to engage the blessed Spirit to this employment about the blessed spirits of men, upon so important an account, and in order to so high and great a glory!

SERMON VII.*

IT is the use we have in hand ; for which purpose some practical inferences have been recommended to you ; and others do yet remain. That which is the fourth inference you may take thus ;—That they cannot but be very gross hypocrites who carry that semblance and shew with them, of having a standing in this kingdom of God ; but were never thus born into it.—Here we have these two things to do—to shew that such pretenders are hypocrites upon this account and—to shew the absurdity and folly of that hypocrisy.

I. That there is manifest hypocrisy in the case. In order to the evincing this, we need only to consider with ourselves, that such persons really have not a standing in God's kingdom, and yet that they would be taken to have. Hypocrisy is when persons pretend to that good which they have not. It is not any kind of semblance which will put a glory upon us ; but the simulation of some good or other ; when men pretend to be better, or that their state is better, than indeed it is, or than

* Preached January 23rd. 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

they are. Nor is it necessary to a man's being a hypocrite that he should understand himself to be so ; but only that he carries a shew or semblance, whether he deceives others by it only, or himself also ; of that good which he hath not. And that such persons are not of God's kingdom we have largely shewn already. They neither are, nor is it possible they should be, upon other terms than by being born into it. There is no other possible way to come into this kingdom, or to be made suitable to the nature and end of this constitution ; but by being new born spirit of spirit. And therefore that good which such persons pretend to, they have not, whoever they are who are not yet new born. They pretend to be the loyal subjects of the kingdom of God, but it is no such thing, if they are not by a new birth, made so ; for by their old and natural birth, and as they were born flesh of the flesh, they were never so. And yet it is very apparent on the other hand, that there are many who would be taken to be of that kingdom, though really they were never regenerate or born into it. And this added to the former, evinces the matter we have in hand ; that such persons are egregious hypocrites, who are not of God's kingdom, and yet pretend to be of it. And that many of the unregenerate do so, we have such evidences of it as these :

1. That they are very loth to go under the contrary repute. There are none but are either subjects of this kingdom, or rebels against the authority and laws of it. There is no medium between rebellion and subjection ; all are either subjects, or rebels. Now they do not profess rebellion, and think it inconvenient to go under the name of rebels, or avow rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. It is plain they would be thought subjects, and are loth to wear that inscription upon their foreheads : Here is a rebel against heaven. They would be thought to be what they are not.

2. They conform themselves to some parts of the law of this kingdom ; that is, in such respects wherein their compliance is more easy, and less expensive, and wherein there is less disinclination of heart to it. There are many very easy externals, which being observed and complied with, a reputation may be gained, without any great pains, or inconvenience and loss, or without imposing too much upon themselves. There is an external obedience to the letter of the law, in some of the less principal commands and precepts of it : For if we compare them, we must acknowledge all that duty which immediately terminates upon God, to be more principal than that which immediately terminates upon men. Possibly they can be so content to put on the garb of just and charita-

ble persons ; yea, if you go with them no further than the externals of religion, they can be content to come to the public assemblies, and to sit before the Lord as his people sit ; with their mouths, *ore tenus*, they shew much love, (Ezek. 33. latter end,) that is, they are very devout persons. And while they do all this, what doth it signify, but that they have a great mind to be taken for subjects, and some of God's kingdom ; and think it possible to gain a repute by such easy means as these, which they have no cause at all to regret.

3. They declare against the more open rebellions of others. It may be they will lift up loud outcries against very gross wickedness in other men, and condemn them for appearing to be, that which themselves in heart really are.

4. They claim the privileges of the subjects of this kingdom. They will have their children to be enrolled, even as theirs who are the members of it, and it may be, come themselves to the Lord's table. They expect the protection and blessing of the great King of this kingdom ; though possibly they may not have much recourse to him about the concerns of their souls ; yet they believe and hope, he will succeed them in their affairs, and prosper them in the world, and save them at last. Why, all these things plainly manifest, that they have a great mind to be taken to be of this kingdom, what really and indeed they are not ; and that there is a great deal of hypocrisy in the case. But

II. We are to shew the absurdity and folly of that hypocrisy. This will be manifest too, if you consider these two things—that it is without any colourable pretence, and—that it is without any valuable design. If one would put any semblance or shew of being what one is not, and manage the business with any wisdom or cunning, there must be these two conjunct, that is, the disguise must be framed with a great deal of art ; and some considerable advantage must be got by it. For otherwise to make such a shew to no purpose, though there were never so great ingenuity shewed in it, is but to play the fool. But now the hypocrisy which is to be found in this case, must needs be absurd, as having neither colourable pretence, nor valuable design.

1. It hath no sufficiently colourable pretence. Some pretence there must be ; otherwise it could not be hypocrisy. But there wants a specious and plausible pretence in the case ; that is, that one should pretend himself to be of this kingdom of God, which consists all of select persons ; and yet he never hath been born into such a state. To pretend to be in a state

into which there was no imaginable way to come, and with the supposed denial, which we must suppose in the present case ; of the only way by which it was possible one could come into such a state. It is impossible there can be a specious pretence for this. But to be a little more particular : It is plain,

(1.) That men do in this case pretend to be that which they abhor. They pretend at present to be of the initial kingdom, or the kingdom of grace ; that is in short, they pretend to be saints ; every one pretends to be so, who pretends to be of this kingdom, for it is a kingdom of such : but being as yet unregenerate, they abhor to be so, and dislike the purity of that state to which they do pretend. This is very gross and absurd. And

(2.) They pretend to hope for what they do not desire, and that is equally absurd. They hope they say to be in the consummate and glorious kingdom above ; but they do not desire to be there : for it is impossible an unregenerate, unholy heart can. No man can desire that which is unsuitable to his nature, and to which his heart, in its habitual inclinations, is repugnant. Every one who hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure, 1 John 3. 3. Now for a man to pretend to the hope of that, which in his own heart he doth not desire ; this is a most absurd pretence. For though it is very possible to desire that which a man doth not hope for ; there are many such irrational desires of things which appear in themselves worth the having ; but which we apprehend no possibility of having : such childish and foolish desires and wouldings there may be, of what we have no hope to attain. But it is impossible there can be, on the other hand, the hope of that whereof I have no desire ; for hope doth superadd to desire, and therefore doth suppose it. Whatever I hope for I desire : though I do not necessarily because I desire a thing therefore hope for it ; for to make a thing hopeful to me it must be possible, and it must be arduous or attended with some kind of appearing difficulty. But I may desire a thing, merely because it appears good, whether I apprehend it possible to be attained or no ; or though there is nothing of arduousness appearing in the case. It may be the object of desire, but not of hope.

And most manifest it is, that whosoever are not thus born spirit of spirit, have not any desire to be partakers in this kingdom rightly understood. That is, it is not possible that an unrenewed, unspiritual heart can desire the employment and business ; the purity and enjoyments of that state ; or the divine presence in which they are to converse. All by which they can so much as cheat themselves in the case, is only this, hav-

ing taken up a defective or false notion of heaven, or a future state of blessedness ; they hope they say, to be happy, when they die, without having ever formed a right notion, what that happiness is, or wherein it consists. But be it what it will, and though it is never so mistaken a notion, it is plain they desire that happiness which they do desire, only as it is put in comparison with hell, not as it stands in comparison with earth. They had rather indeed be happy, with such an imaginary happiness, as they fancy to themselves in heaven ; than to go to hell : but they had rather continue on earth perpetually, enjoying the good things it affords ; than that heaven itself, though suited by their own imaginations never so much to the wish of their own hearts. An immortality on earth would be chosen rather. This is not to desire heaven as its blessedness or chief good ; for whatsoever I desire as such, I desire absolutely. It is impossible I can take that for my chief good, which I would be content never to enjoy. As much as they pretend to desire heaven, yet they wish never to come there, if they could stay in this world always, and have what it affords them. Therefore I say, they most absurdly pretend to hope for that heaven, as their best good, which they do not so much as desire ever to enjoy. And

(3.) There is a great deal of absurdity in the pretence upon this account, that very often it is to be seen through. It is so thin and slight a cover that any eye may even see through it. All who are hypocrites are not artificial ones : there are a great many hypocrites, and the far greater part of them, who are mere bunglers at it ; they are hypocrites without any skill or artifice ; and so they take up a pretence which any body, with half an eye, may penetrate and see through. As for example, a person who pretends to be a subject of God's kingdom, and yet makes it manifest in the course of his conversation that he stands in no awe of God at all, which is a prime thing in that subjection. So the case is very often, as the Psalmist takes notice, Psalm, 36, (beginning,) The wickedness of the wicked saith in my heart, the fear of God is not before his eyes. His wickedness speaks in my heart, that he is one fearless of God, and who stands in no awe of him. So it is with many a man who professes somewhat of religion, that is, who doth not profess atheism, or rebellion against heaven ; yet the wickedness of his course and practice is such as to speak in another man's heart, sure this man has no fear of God before his eyes. Now how absurd is this, to put on a covering and disguise, which doth not hide a man at all ! The whole course of their lives proclaims them to be no other than earthly, carnal worldlings, while they pretend to be designing for heaven ; for

every one who professes a relation to this kingdom, is understood to stand related not only to the inchoate but the consummate state of it, or the kingdom of heaven. But while they pretend themselves to do so, the pretence is easily to be seen through, and they who observe the ordinary course of their conversation, discourses and designs, easily see that they are mere compositions of earth; and unless you can suppose a clod of clay can be carried up into heaven, they are never like to come there. It is to be seen that they are men, as it were made of earth; and all their discourses, converses, actions, and designs smell of earth. It is therefore observable, that no man can make himself more ridiculous, than when he takes upon himself to act a part, to act it partially, and when he goes to personate another man to do it absurdly: why he had better have contented himself to have appeared only in his own likeness, and in his natural face and posture. Thus the case is with such hypocrites; they do, it may be, disguise themselves *quoad hoc*, as to this particular thing; but then they lay themselves open in something or other else. Just as if some vain person should mightily pride himself in some gay rich apparel, which he had thrown on upon some part of him; and all the other parts appeared clothed with nothing but rags, or exposed to view more shameful nakedness. How ridiculous should we account such a person! And

(4.) The pretence with many is an evanid thing, and soon vanishes away. And then how great is the absurdity to make myself be thought, if I could then succeed so far to be thought, such a one yesterday, and to-day discover myself to be quite another? They who pretend to be of this kingdom of God, and the appearance from whence they would gain to themselves, that estimate and reputation, being nothing that hath life in it; as not being born or connatural to the new creature; it will then soon be a withering and vanishing thing. As Job speaks of the hypocrite; Can a rush grow without mire? Job 8. 11. Can there be verdure and greenness, and fair appearance, and nothing at all to maintain it? A mere spider's web, such a thing is the best pretence of the hypocrite; why how soon is it swept away? It is very apparent that the living root being wanting, that which is merely external of a person's religion, will in tract of time become tiresome, and he will be very well content to throw it away himself, when he finds it to be for convenience. So we find Job speaking again concerning the hypocrite, chap. 27. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? That is, he will not be always religious; for calling upon God there, is only a *synechdochal* expression for religion in general. Will

he always call upon God? No surely; for he doth not delight himself in the Almighty, and hath not a temper of spirit suited to God; the habitual disposition of his soul is opposite and averse; God is one in whom he can take no pleasure; and then you may be sure he will not call upon him always; his religion will have an end, and he will soon grow weary. And how absurd a thing is it to make up, and wear a while a disguise, and have afterwards a kind of an unhappy necessity come upon me to have it made appear, I did but act a part, and no more? That is the first thing. But

2. It is without any valuable design. For what is there to be got by it for a man to pretend himself to be a loyal subject of God's kingdom, who never had his heart changed and renewed, and made suitable to the laws and constitutions of it? Why, certainly nothing worth designing whether you consider the matter with reference to God or man. In reference to man; him indeed you may deceive; but that is to no purpose. In reference to God, though that were to never so great a purpose, yet him you can never deceive. It is true you may deceive man; but what is to be got by it? What is the hope of a hypocrite though he gain, when God takes away his soul? Job 27. 8. Alas! what a pitiful little will the greatest gain dwindle into, when God comes to take away his soul? What is he the better for it then?

But as to God what rational design can a man form to himself, in reference to him, by pretending to be what in this case he is not?

(1.) It is plain he can never deceive God by that pretence. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." You do but deceive yourselves, as if he had said, by attempting to deceive him. Every man shall reap as he sows; he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. 6. 8. You do but deceive yourselves, and not at all impose upon God, if being flesh you look for any better issue of things, than what is suitable to your state and temper; and if not being spiritual you have any expectations of that state of blessedness, which is only agreeable to such a temper. That puts the matter quite out of doubt, you cannot deceive God in the case. But

(2.) You will highly provoke him, even by an attempt of it, or admitting an imagination in your own hearts, that you can do it. For what higher an affront can we put upon the infinite and eternal God than to suppose him like one of the idol gods of the nations, who hath eyes to see, and sees not? Who would ever worship him as a deity, whom we think we could

impose upon by a lie, or a false appearance? Indeed there cannot be a greater absurdity, and no man can act more inconsistently with himself than at once to profess homage to an object; and think it possible at the same time to impose a cheat upon it. It is truly to deface my own act: I give him worship; that carries the face and appearance of very high thoughts which I have of him, and as if I took him for a very excellent being but to think to impose upon him by a piece of falsehood; that carries the appearance of the meanest and most despicable thoughts of him which can be imagined. And therefore we find with what severity the holy God speaks, in that case of any man, who does but say in his heart; I shall have peace, though he walks after the imaginations of his heart: my jealousy shall smoke against that man, Deut. 29. 19. 20. "What, will he take up such contemptuous thoughts of me? I will make him pay dear for that very thought, and my jealousy shall smoke against him."

(3.) By this attempt to impose upon the blessed God by false appearances, we bring in very pregnant convictive testimony against our own souls. Hypocrisy always does that. There is no man who plays the hypocrite, but that which he counterfeits, and whereof he puts on the appearance, he doth thereby proclaim it to be good, and valuable; otherwise why doth he imitate or counterfeit? People are not wont to put on a false appearances, to make themselves seem worse than they are, but to make themselves appear better: and their very practice in this thing carries this testimony with it against themselves, that they judge that to be better, and yet decline it. They judge that to be a good whereof they thought fit to clothe themselves with the shew; they practically acknowledge it to be a good, and thereby give a mighty testimony against themselves. Thou thoughtest it a good and desirable thing to be a christian; otherwise why didst thou seem one? to be sincere; otherwise why didst thou pretend to it? And if thou dost think so, why didst thou not aim to be such a one? Beside,

(4.) They hereby lose the opportunity which they might otherwise have had of becoming what they seemed to be. The moralist speaks about the business of wisdom, *Mul-ti ad sapientiam pervervissent, nisi se ad sapientiam pervenisse putarant: many had attained to be wise, had they not thought themselves to be already so.* If they had not cozened themselves with the appearance of it, many might have come to have been sincere. And it is a miserable thing to please one's self with the shadow, all that time

wherein one should have been getting the substance, till the time is expired and gone.

But here now a question may perhaps arise, by some such person or other, who may fear himself not yet to be sincere, and may therefore say, "What am I to do in this case? while I think I am not sincere and while perhaps that really is my case? Am I to throw away all my profession? Or am I to profess enmity against God? Being not yet regenerate, and therefore not yet a subject, must I therefore profess myself a rebel?" It would be very easy to discover what is duty in this case, if we do but consider and fasten upon what is only faulty in it. Now wheresoever there is hypocrisy there must be some good wanting; and there must be the present appearance and semblance of that good which is wanting. Thus it is in the present case. This good is wanting, a real subjection of heart and spirit to the laws and constitutions of God's spiritual kingdom, which is only brought about by the new birth. Well, but here is the appearance of it too, else there could not be hypocrisy. Now let us consider where the fault lies in this case: the fault cannot lie simply in the appearance, but only as it is untrue; for there are true appearances, as well as false. The appearance therefore is upon no other account faulty, but as it is false; for if the good were there, whereof there is the appearance, the appearance would not only be lawful, but a duty. We are to hold forth the word of life, by which we have been made to live; as the apostle directs, Phil. 2. 16. Now therefore inasmuch as the fault here is, that while there is such an appearance, that good doth not *subesse*, there is not that good underneath which there ought to be; so the thing now to be done, is not to throw away the appearance, but to have the good supplied; that is in this case, to be restlessly intent to obtain that Spirit, and the vital influences and operations of it, by which that great transforming work may be done. And how great encouragement is there for this at his hand, who hath told us, that if earthly parents who are evil, will give good gifts to their children; bread rather than a stone; a fish rather than a scorpion; how much rather will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it? It is not because this Spirit is out of our power, and not at our command, that we have not the influences and operations of it, according to our need; but because we apprehend not, and will not admit the serious apprehension, of our need. It is a kind of contempt of this blessed Spirit that these pleasant vital influences are so little valued by creatures lost in darkness and death; that we rather content ourselves to be desolate, and seem careless whether we live or die for the

present ; or are happy or miserable to all eternity. It is upon such accounts as these that the blessed Spirit, though the Author and Fountain of all love and goodness, and benignity, and sweetness, retires : and that resolution seems taken up, “ My Spirit shall no longer strive.” It is no wonder if it do not, when there is so little apprehension of our need of him, so little dependance upon him ; so little craving and seeking and solicitude, whether it be an indweller in our souls, or no : as if the doctrine of the Holy Ghost were a strange and new thing to our ears ; or we had not yet heard whether there was a Holy Ghost or no.

SERMON VIII.*

SEVERAL inferences have been recommended to you already, and others remain to be added. A fifth inference, is—that the depravation of man's nature in the state of apostacy is total.—Being born denotes a total production, and the thing produced is only somewhat substituted in the room of the nature depraved: and what was corrupted and what is substituted instead of it, must necessarily be commensurate and proportionable to one another. If a man should have a leg or arm perish; he would not say, the production of that arm was a being born; for being born, is the production of all the parts together, not of this or that single part alone. And hence it is that that which is corrupted, and that which is anew produced, are in Scripture spoken of under the name of a man; an old man, and a new man. The frame of graces, that impress of holiness, wherein the new creature doth consist, must be understood to be a whole entire body of graces; as the sins which meet together originally in the nature of man, are called by the name of the body of the sins of the flesh,

* Preached February 6th, 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

which is to be destroyed ; and elsewhere, the body of sin. It is therefore a forlorn miserable state that men are antecedently in, to their being born spirit of spirit. And it is of no small consequence, that it be distinctly understood, and sink into our hearts, that this depravation is total, and that we need to be made new throughout. As we have it in 2 Cor. 5. 17. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. Where this is not understood, it is of most unhappy consequence in these two respects—men take not up right thoughts of the distressedness of their own case ; and—by consequence they never apply themselves to the proper business of the redress of it.

I. They never take up right thoughts of the wretchedness of their own case. They understand neither the extent of it, nor wherein it doth especially consist. They understand not how extensive it is in a twofold respect, that is, to the subject disaffected, and the object whereunto they are disaffected. There is a twofold totality to be considered in this matter, both subjective, and objective. The subject is disaffected universally in every faculty ; the mind, and judgment, and will, and conscience and affections, and executive powers ; and by a kind of participation, the whole outward man. The apostle applying passages out of the Old Testament, runs over the several parts ; Their throat is an open sepulchre, the poison of asps is under their lips, their feet make haste to shed blood, &c. Rom. 3. This is little apprehended by them who consider not the work to be wrought under the notion of a birth, which supposes the antecedent corruption, which always leads the way to generation, to have been universal and total.

And it is as little considered, that this disaffection, as it hath spread itself through the whole subject ; so it refers to the whole object, which they ought to be otherwise affected to. : that is, the whole law of God, or the entire sum of their duty. They make nothing of it, considered as a duty and enjoined by God, and whereby they pay a respect and homage to him ; and indeed every act of duty should be in that regard an act of religion ; and that religion is of no value, if this do not run through it, and is only the body and carcass of it, but not the soul and spirit. This is not understood, that in reference to every part of duty which is enjoined, there is a disaffection in the spirits of men, and they are to every good work reprobate : that is, they do not know how to make proof of themselves, or approve themselves in any work they undertake which is truly good ; and cannot accordingly be approved of God in what they do or go about.

But besides that the extent of this wretched case is not un :

derstood by such as do not consider, that a total depravation is now befallen the nature of man ; so that is waved and overlooked which is the special thing in respect both of the object and subject, wherein the misery of their case doth more principally lie : that is, in respect of the subject, the principal depravation is in the heart ; in respect of the object, the principal is towards God himself. True it is indeed that by the corruption which hath spread itself through the world, men are become hateful to God, and haters of one another ; very ill-tempered towards one another ; but we may observe that men are a great deal more easily brought to civility, than religion ; and are with much less ado, whatever their tempers and dispositions are, brought to be kind one to another, than to take up loyal and dutiful affections towards God, and deport themselves suitably towards him. Nothing is more plain than that this depravedness which is in the spirits of men, and which this begetting them of the Spirit is to cure, hath for its principal subject and seat, the heart ; and for the principal object the blessed God. That is, the heart, as that doth contain within the compass of it, the judgment, will and affections of the soul ; will by no means endure to be exercised about God. Notional thoughts men can tell how to employ about him, without any great trouble to themselves ; they regret it not ; but deeply to consider, and with a design to choose him as their God ; to desire after him, to love him, and delight in him, and fear before him as such, therein the great disaffection of the spirit of a man towards God, doth especially discover itself. This men will not understand, while they apprehend not that the thing to be effected by regeneration, is to make them new at the heart ; and to renew the heart principally towards God : "Create in me a clean heart, O God ; renew a right spirit within me." When once that work is done, then this becomes the sense and posture of the soul ; "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." A renewed soul presently turns itself to God, and hath a bias put upon it, which inclines it towards him : "Whom have I in heaven, but thee ? and there is none on earth I desire in comparison of thee." He is singled out as the one Good, in which the soul doth centre and rest ; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever : " that is, dwell in the divine presence, and be always nigh to God.

But this great disaffection of the heart towards God, is still overlooked by the generality of men, as if they did not need to be cured in this respect. And herein they are very much confirmed, because it is become so customary a thing never to make such kind of reflections upon themselves which may na-

turally and probably lead to the discovery of their case, in this regard. Men do not compare themselves with the rule, and what it requires the dispositions of men's spirits to God, should be. It summarily saith, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and all thy strength, and all thy mind." And they do not compare themselves with the examples of holy men; for such they cannot but read of, if they consult their Bibles; and such they may possibly sometimes converse with, who can say somewhat of the disposition of their spirits towards God; how pleasant it is to be conversant with him; how they can entertain themselves in solitude, and what a solace it is to a vacant and leisure hour, wherein they can be entirely taken up in conversing with God. They do not compare themselves with the rule, or with other holy men; but they compare themselves, as the apostle speaks, with themselves, (2 Cor. 10. 12.) and so they are not wise, or never come to understand themselves. They only compare themselves with themselves; and they find they agree with themselves well enough; that is, they are such to day, as they were yesterday; and this week as last; and this year, as the year before, and for many years, past. They agree with themselves very well, and so only comparing themselves with themselves they never come to understand the case. And this is very natural for men to do, and not to compare themselves with any thing which will be a reproof to them, or look ill upon them. And indeed if they took measure of their own spirits by the rule or by another good and holy man; they would say, "Things are not so with me as they should be, and as with such and such it is." When I put myself upon a trial, I find I have no disposition of heart to love God; good thoughts of him are not at all delightful to me. But when they compare themselves with themselves, they can say, "I do not vary from myself; just such a temper of spirit as I had, I have." And so they think all is well, and never grow wise, or come to be instructed concerning the truth of their case. But if this great principle of truth could once obtain to be fixed in the minds of men, that there hath been a total depravation, and their whole souls are disaffected to the whole of their duty; and especially towards God, and all that duty which more immediately terminates on him; they would have quite other thoughts concerning the distressedness of their case, than is common with them. And it is of ill consequence that so plain and great a truth as this is overlooked.

II. Hence also they apprehend not wherein their redress must lie. They are apt either to think that some partial reformation is sufficient, and if they are reformed a little in this or that particular thing, then matters will be right and good,

and will be well with them. If the drunkard take up and become sober, he thinks concerning himself, that he is a new man. If an unjust person admit a conviction, or it may be, is taught a little prudence by observing how much any thing of that kind reflects upon his reputation, and so he orders his affairs with more exactness, he is ready to look upon himself as regenerate. But if it were considered that there must be a being born, and that I am in a total corruption; surely another cure would be thought of than that, and it would appear no more proportionable to the case, than a man whose body was all over leprous, and full of sores, would acquiesce in the cure of a slight scratch in his little finger.

And as they apprehend such a partial reformation sufficient, so they apprehend too from hence, that a vital principle is unnecessary. It is very true indeed, that with only some partial main, a principle of life may consist, but a universal corruption imports death. If the case were therefore understood aright, men would see it necessary in order to their cure, that they should be made alive, and a principle of life put into them; which a total depravation speaks to be absent. They would never think themselves well till then, and would find that as they are alienated from the life of God; so their business was to be made alive to God, and to Jesus Christ, as those who have been dead. But again,

The sixth inference.—Since in order to any one's partaking of God's kingdom, he must be born spirit of spirit, we infer further, that whosoever becomes truly and sincerely religious, a new creature is transmitted and communicated to him.—This being not understood, it is all a man's business, to contrive and form for himself an artificial religion; and there are several sad consequences ensue thereupon. As

I. Men attempt to perform what is proper to the divine life, without it. The actions of the divine life which are visible to men, carry a kind of amiableness in them, in the common consciences of men and they attempt those actions which are done from a principle of life, without considering, that to be sincerely religious, is to have a new nature. They think to do these actions without that life; just as he who is observed in story, to have attempted the setting up of a carcass of one newly dead; he would fain have it stand in the posture of a living body, but how to make it stand so he knew not. The head falls one way, and the hands another, and the legs tremble under it, at last he cries out, "*Deest aliquid intus, there wants something within.*" Just so do men busy themselves to make an artificial frame, which is indeed a dead carcass of

religion; they cannot tell how to inspirit it, and it will upon no terms do, but hang and waver this way, and that, And hence therefore,

II. All the actions of religion become exceedingly grievous and irksome, and no pleasure is taken in them. You know it is a very easy thing for a man to move to and fro his own living body, where he will; pass into a speedy or slower motion, as he sees cause, without any considerable pain or difficulty; but it would be a very tedious thing to move to and fro a dead carcass; that would put him to greater pain. Here lies the difference between these two sorts of men; a man truly religious, and who therefore hath a new nature communicated to him, (as there is where any are begotten,) and other men. When any do not consider this, their business is to make up an external frame of religion, and to act and move and carry it to and fro with them; and that is alike burdensome as for a living man to move to and fro a dead carcass. But to one who is truly and spiritually alive, his new nature which is communicated to him, doth in a natural way, animate the frame of religion, in which he is to act; so that the actions of it are easy and light, as all the acts of nature are.

III. Hence it is, that they are so manifestly defective imitations of religion. Their attempts and essays to do like religious men, have notorious and observable flaws in them, because they do not consider, there must be given a new nature, before I become truly religious. Some think it is only to do as men are taught, or only as a piece of art. And when we go to imitate only a natural action there will be some very observable flaw and defect; some visible disparity in the attempt; as if you should make a puppet act just like a living child, the difference would be soon discovered. And hence,

IV. Religion comes to be given over. Whereas where it ever comes to be taken up as an artificial thing, it is taken upon design of some present advantage and convenience; therefore if the inconveniences which shall come to you thereby be greater by continuing it, than laying it aside; the reason why it was taken up being vanished, itself must needs cease. If the conveniences are not greater in a course of religion, than the inconveniences they sought to avoid, the religion itself must needs cease of course; and so it commonly doth. But where religion is in a man as a nature, it cannot do so. I can easily lay aside my cloak, but not my flesh which is vitally united with me, and is one thing with me, by a principle of life which runs through me. It is therefore of great concernment truly and thoroughly to understand this, that wherever any become truly religious, a new nature is communicated.

Being taught only signifies the acquisitions of art ; but being born, and principled and constituted of such a complexion ; signifies a stayed invariable principle of those actions which proceed from it.

A seventh inference is—That the constitution of God's kingdom must needs be spiritual ; for men are born into it spirit of spirit,—It hath been a great modern controversy, as well as an ancient one, among philosophers, whether the constitution of the universe is of *primordia*, which are mechanical, or spermetical and vital. It is a dangerous thing when this comes to be a matter of doubt in religion, whether the constitution of this divine kingdom is mechanical, or vital. According as the greater part of men practise, and as their habitual temper is, it seems as if it were thought that Christianity is nothing else but a piece of mechanism. But certainly if you are born into this kingdom, as they who come truly into it spirit of spirit ; then the constitution of this kingdom is not mechanical, or an artificial contexture of things ; but a frame of things which doth in a spiritually-natural way, grow up towards that pitch it is designed to ; and is that spirit of life which doth diffuse itself through all the mystical body of Christ ; which makes the connection between part and part, and keeps the body entire and firm to itself, and makes it a consistent and stable thing. And hereupon it must needs be consequent

I. That whatever there is of disagreement among christians, who are the living members of this kingdom and body ; it must needs be unnatural. The reason is, that all who are of this kingdom and truly belonging to it ; are born into it, and in that birth partake of one and the same nature, by which they are connaturalized to one another, and to their common Lord and Head : He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, (Heb. 2. 11.) or make one entire piece. Wherefore now what there is of disagreement among christians, must needs be preternatural, and beside nature. And hence it is consequent, that it must needs proceed from ill designs ; that is, from the devil and his instruments, who make it their business what they can, to act persons diversly ; when if these things be left to their natural course, and the new nature in men is permitted to act undisturbedly, and according to its genuine tendency ; it would all run one way. It is needful to be well aware of this, whatever there is of disagreement is accidental to it, and certainly proceeds from a foreign enemy, and somewhat without it, which sets such things on foot, and keeps them on foot, with an ill design towards this kingdom. If the new nature did run its course, and were not accidentally disturbed, by what is not of the constitution of this kingdom, it

would certainly run the same way. It is one thing to say what is the constitution of the persons ; and another, what is the constitution of them as members of this kingdom and born into it. The corruption of their own hearts, is extrinsical to the constitution of this kingdom ; for it is only so far as they are new born that they are members of this kingdom. The sphere and verge of this kingdom, doth properly and directly take in only the spiritual part. It is a sphere of spirituality ; and what there is in it opposite thereunto, is alien to the constitution of it, and doth not belong to it. It is a great thing to be well possessed with this apprehension, that the great enemy of this kingdom, does certainly foment whatever there is of disagreement among them who are born the vital members of it ; and it must be understood to proceed from an ill design. And

II. It must argue an evil state, and the prevalency of a contrary principle. If there be divisions among you, are you not carnal ? 1 Cor. 3. 3. They who are of this kingdom are spiritual ; they are born into it spirit of spirit ; so they came into it. Therefore so far as there is a prevailing disagreement and dividedness in the state of things in the church of Christ ; so far the persons who are of that state are in a decay, and lapsed into carnality, and things grow worse and worse, as the church grows more divided. That spiritual principle which agrees to every member of this kingdom, as he is born into it, drives all to oneness. It proceeds from God, and tends to him ; all are children of the same Father, and they are all begotten to one and the same great and lively hope of an eternal and undefiled inheritance. The *primordia* of the new creature necessarily leads to unity, among all who are of this kingdom.

III. Where there is any departure from this said oneness, there is so much of the decay of the spiritual nature, by the communication whereof men are said to be born into this kingdom. So much disunion as there is, so much carnality ; and the church is then in a languishing state spiritually, when it is in a divided state. The not considering this is attended with a double mischief very obvious ; that is, that in different respects, the differences and disagreements among christians, are thought greater and less, than indeed they are. They are thought greater than they are, because it is not considered how the nature which is every where communicated among the true members of this kingdom, doth make them substantially one, in the great and main and more principal things. There is a greater stress put upon the differences of those who are christians indeed, than there ought, or can be ; in comparison of the small things wherein they differ. And they very much

mistake who think them to be great ; for they necessarily agree in one common, new, spiritual, divine nature and principle of life : and it is impossible they should disagree in any one thing, comparatively to so great a thing as this. Whatsoever other differences there are, they are comparatively little, in respect of their agreement in this. They cannot differ so but they are all one in Christ Jesus ; whoever is in Christ is a new creature : they all come in him under one mould and stamp by their new creation.

But then in another respect the difference is thought a great deal less than indeed it is among christians. Consider christians who are truly and sincerely such, and so the difference cannot be so great as many times it is thought ; but then consider the difference between those who are christians in truth, and those who are only so by profession ; and there the difference, for the same reason, must be greater than it is commonly thought to be ; for there the difference is between a living thing and a dead ; as much as between a piece of nature and art ; a man and a statue. So that it is a very vain kind of confidence which such pretend to, who because they have made a shift to imitate and resemble a christian, they think the case is well with them, when as yet they may as much differ from them whose case is truly good, as a living man doth from a dead carcass.

The eighth inference is this—That love to God cannot but be characteristical to every regenerate person—For every such a one is a child of God, and born of him ; and certainly it ought to be looked upon, as the property of a child, to love the Father. If you love him who begat ; that is supposed and taken for granted, as a thing not to be doubted. 1 John 5. 1. And therefore to have a heart destitute of the love of God, and having no love to him, is a most unreasonable and unnatural thing ; and a certain argument, that one is not his child, and hath not been born spirit of spirit. It is very true there may be so great a degeneration in the old decayed nature of man ; but in the new nature, there can never be such a degeneration, as that a person born of God should not love him. It would be the greatest inconsistency imaginable ; and therefore a certain argument, that such were none of God's children. For though it is very true indeed, as it is commonly observed, that love doth descend, more than ascend ; from him who begets, to them who are begotten ; so love in this case more especially doth a great deal more descend from God to them who are born of him, than ascend from them to him. But though it descends a great deal more, yet it doth really and truly ascend to him, though not indeed so much. There is nothing more connatural to the new creature than the love of

God. The very heart and soul of the new creature is love to him primarily, and therein lies the end of the new creation, to form a person to God. "God is love," and every soul who is begotten anew by him, is turned into a like nature, and becomes love, as God is love. "He who dwells in love, dwells in God, for God is love." There cannot but be a love-commerce, more or less, between God, and every new-born soul. As the true mother in that great proof of Solomon's wisdom, was distinguished by her love to her child; so we may proportionably say, that a child of God is distinguished by that love which works towards God. We find some whom it never toucheth to have God dishonoured and disgraced; but it goes to the heart of a true child of God, when his Father is struck at, his name reproached and torn, or any thing done against his interest.

The ninth inference,—How great is the obligation upon all the regenerate to the love of one another. If you love God, how can it be but you must have a love for them who love God; who have all one parent, all partake of one and the same nature, all expecting the same inheritance; who have one and the same spirit, the same hope and calling? Upon the consideration of their being new-born, it is evident they must have the same Father and inheritance: If children, then heirs; and joint-heirs with one another, as well as, with Christ, Rom. 8. 17. And every one who loveth him who begeth, loveth him also who is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, &c.

We further infer, tenthly—That the reason is evident, why the proper means of their regeneration, or spiritual birth, are very dear to renewed souls. There is a spiritually-natural reason for it. There are those in the world, who cannot believe otherwise, but it must be folly and fanaticism; or a mere humour and affectation, that any should discover that love to the word of the gospel, or the ministry of the gospel, which they do. But if men would consider this, it would give them a natural account of this love. For is it not natural to love the means by which even my very nature itself hath been communicated to me, and by which I am what I am? The apostle gives us the reason why we should love the word; As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, (1Pet. 2. 2;) that is, as those who by it are new-born. It is a violence to the new nature of the children of God, to withhold from them the word of the gospel, and the ministry of it which hath been instrumental to their new birth; and cannot but infer pain and anguish, to be abridged and deprived of what was so conducive to their spiritual beings.

The last inference, we collect,—That this same kingdom and

church of God, which is truly and really so, must needs be a growing thing. All who are of it are born into it, and so become as it were naturally subjects ; there is a new nature communicated to all who are in it ; and therefore it being made up of the spiritual nature and life, will grow, till it comes to its maturity. Never fear but it will grow, behold it never so languishing ; never so assaulted, struck at, and contested against. For all who are born into it consist of spirit and life ; and therefore it is impossible, but it must become a mature thing, worthy both of the great Author and Founder of it ; and of the great design for which he formed it ; namely, that he might have a people to be eternally governed by a placid, gentle empire, and a delightful, easy sway ; who should be ruled by a beck and a nod ; and to whom every intimation of his will, should have the force of a perfect command, without any the least regret ; and that all the subjects of this kingdom, should partake in the glory of it. And so it will be a living kingdom, and will be a growing thing, till it come to that glorious maturity, which will answer both the greatness of the Undertaker, and the excellency of the design, for which this new nature and life was given to it.
