

THE OFFICE
AND
WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,
IN EVERY AGE,

With reference to particular Persons :

CONSIDERED IN
SEVERAL SERMONS

On John. III. 6. and Gal. v. 25.



TO MRS. HOWE.

MADAM,

IT was apprehended the entire thoughts of this great man, upon so important a subject, might be very useful to the world, and acceptable to many: and though they are only a specimen of his ordinary course of preaching, without any finishing hand, or further design, or perhaps, always his ripest thoughts; yet they carry the lively signatures of the admirable genius, and excellent spirit, which always appeared in his composures, and rendered them so peculiarly fit to instruct and impress the minds of men. Whosoever considers the compass and variety of the matter, the thread and connexion of the thoughts, the striking imagery, and the pertinence and pungency of the expression, will see reason to admire the vast capacity of the author, and be easily disposed to forgive any lesser neglects and escapes; especially when he only proposed to speak familiarly and without any written notes, and allowed himself a liberty in expressing the well digested and disposed conceptions of his mind.

It will be necessary for your satisfaction, as well as the readers, to assure you, that the same care has been taken, and the same method observed, in reviewing and transcribing this part of the subject, as was used in the other; as the manuscript was written by the same skilful and diligent hand.

The intimacy of a long friendship, and mutual respect, the endearments of the nearest relation, for several of the latter years of his life; the high honour you always paid him, and the singular value he expressed for you, living and dying; give you the best title to these two volumes of posthumous discourses of the Spirit, and of family prayer; and to any respect we are capable of shewing you. We believe the noble argument as well as the excellent author, will be peculiarly acceptable and delightful to you, who were so well acquainted with his spirit and preaching; and may contribute to a well grounded peace of mind in a clearer discerning of a regenerate state; and to your daily walking in the Spirit, and improvement in the spiritual life.

This is the sincere desire of,

Honoured Madam,

Your respectful humble servants.

Goodman's-Fields,
July, 9, 1736.

W. HARRIS.
JOHN EVANS.



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

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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-

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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

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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

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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 instating 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

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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,

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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.

SERMON IX.*

Gal. v. 25.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

IN asserting the office of the Holy Ghost, or that work which it hath undertaken, in reference to the spirits of men ; we have already spoken of one great act of that office ; that is, the regenerating, and begetting anew of souls into God's kingdom ; spirit of spirit. We have now two other acts before us in these words ; that is, its maintaining the life, and causing all the right motion of regenerate souls. The former of these are contained in the supposition ; "If we live in the Spirit : " the latter is intimated in the inferred precept ; "Let us walk in the Spirit." Both are alike imputed to the Spirit of God here, and it is represented as the very element of life, and the spring of all holy motion to renewed souls ; which fills the whole region, as it were, with *vitality*, in which they converse, and draw their continual breath. The case is in this respect, much like in the new creation, as in the old, and in the sphere of grace, as in that of nature. It is said concerning the natural world, that it doth, as it were, subsist in God ; and it is spoken of the new creation here ; and both in one

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form of expression: In him we live, and move, and have our being, Acts 17. 28. And here we read of living in the Spirit; and walking or moving in the Spirit. There is only this difference in the form of expression: that whereas we have three distinct phrases used to set forth the dependance of the natural creation upon God;—living and moving and having being in him;—there are only the two former used here in reference to the new creation, living and moving; living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit. The reason of the difference is obvious, that we have in reference to the former, that super-added expression, “and have our being;” because in this natural, material, sensible world, there are many things which *are*, that do not *live*: but with the new creation it is not so; here, to *live* and to *be*, are one and the same thing; and it is entirely and wholly a being of life. A collection of all vital principles compose and make it up what it is; and there is nothing in the new creation concerning which it can be said, it *is*, but lives not: for it is all life throughout. And as philosophy has been wont to teach, even modern philosophy itself, that creation and conservation are not diverse acts, but the latter only the former continued; and that God doth by the continual communication of the same influence, by which he created and made this world, keep it in the state wherein it is, that it doth relapse back into its old nothing; that there would not need a positive act of God to destroy the world, if he would turn all things to nothing again, but only to suspend and withhold the influence by which every thing comes to be what it is; so it is in the new creation or in the new creature, too. The very suspension of that influence by which it began to be, or to live (which is all one) must certainly infer the failure and extinction of the whole.

Think therefore what it would be if all vital influence were suspended and withheld on a sudden from this material and sensible world in which we converse. You might hereupon frame the apprehension within yourselves of the face of the earth all in a sudden bestrewed with the dead carcasses of men and beasts, the beauty and pleasant verdure of it all vanished and gone, and nothing left in time but a great clod of dirt! This great temple of the Deity which he inhabits by a vital presence, that diffuses life up and down every where, all turned into a ruinous heap. If I say, there were a suspension of vital influence, supposing an influence continued by which this material world should still be. Why, so it must be, proportionably in reference unto the new creature too. There is the *substratum* to be considered, which is a part of the natural creation, the soul or the man himself; but, that vital influ-

ence being suspended by which the new creature was made to be what it was, there is nothing left but a dead man, a dead soul ! The temple of the Holy Ghost (as we must suppose it to have been, beautified and adorned with the divine image on every side, in every part) laid waste and desolate ! Nothing now but darkness and confusion, and misery and death, there where God dwelt ! So the case would be, if we could suppose such a thing as the suspension of that influence, by which the life of the new creature first began to spring up.

And there is not only a parity in the cases, but in some respects, a sameness. For we must know that all divine influence is in one respect, that is, *ex parte principii*, one and the same, and only differs, or is diversified *ex parte termini*, according as it doth terminate. We cannot conceive the divine influences to be distinguished in their Fountain, that is, in the divine Being itself the Almighty Spirit, whence all proceeds and flows out. That Almighty Spirit, if you consider the operations of it, produces divers, but by an influence that is radically and in the Fountain one and the same. As in reference to those diversities of its operations that were performed to the church ; as divers as they were, they were all wrought by one and the same Spirit. The spirit of prophecy was not one spirit, and of healing another, and of tongues another, but one and the same Spirit did thus diversify its operations, according as the products were divers which were caused by it, and which it was afterwards to continue in that being which it gave. To suppose a difference or diversity of influence in the Fountain itself, the divine Being, were to suppose God to differ from himself, and to put somewhat in God that were not God ; a thing most repugnant to the simplicity of the divine Being. But the divine influences may be diversified terminatively, according to the subjects in which it is received. Nature is various in this, and that, and the other creature (speaking of the *natura naturata* ; as for distinction's sake, it is wont to be called) and the influences are diversified according to those diverse natures in which they terminate ; and according to the different purposes which the exigency of those natures doth require should be served and complied with. And so that influence, which originally and in the Fountain is one and the same, according as it goes forth to beget and continue a variety of productions of this, or that, or another kind, is an influence that gives and that preserves being to things concerning which it can only be said, they *are* ; it is a *vital* influence to things that *live* ; it is a *motive* influence to things that *move* ; it is an *intellectual* influence to things that are capable of *understanding* ; it is a *holy* influence unto what is *holy*, to what

it hath made holy, and is to continue and keep so ; it is *light*, as it terminates in light ; and *love*, as it terminates in love ; and *power*, as it terminates in power ; and holy gracious *action* as it doth terminate in such actions.

But it is the principle of such actions, the subordinate principle, here signified by the name of life, or included in living, that we are now to speak of ; and we shall speak of the action which proceeds from that life, and shew how that hath rise also from the Spirit, when we come to the latter part of the text. From the former part the truth that we have to observe you may take thus—The blessed Spirit of God doth continue and maintain that life ; whereof it hath been the Author, in every renewed soul. —We shall in speaking to this,—Very briefly open the words to you, that we may clear the ground which the truth recommended to you hath in the text, and—Shall next give you some account of the thing which is asserted therein.

I. As to the former, you must take notice,

1. That the *if* in the beginning of the text is not an *if* of dubitation, but of argumentation—"If ye live in the Spirit."—The apostle does not say so as doubting, nor was his design to signify that he had a doubt whether they did so, yea, or no ; but supposing or taking that for granted, it is only a form used by him (as it is common in arguing hypothetically) thereupon to reason with them from such a supposed principle. The *if* therefore signifies as much as whereas, or since : since or inasmuch as ye live in the Spirit, therefore walk in the Spirit. As in Col. 3. 1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above : If ye be, that is, "Since ye are ; it is the appearance which as professing christians ye make, the aspect which ye visibly hold forth to men, namely, that of persons united with Christ, and made alive by him ; since ye are risen with Christ, therefore set your affections on things above ; act and do accordingly." So we are to take it here, and it affords us a clear ground for a positive assertion, those who are christians indeed do live in the Spirit.

2. We must note, that to live cannot reasonably be understood as intending the first reception of the principle of life, but the continuation of that principle. This form of expression, namely, by the present tense, is commonly used to hold forth to us the continuedness of any thing ; when we do not say such a thing was, or such a thing will be ; but such a thing is, it notes, I say, the continuedness of the thing spoken of ; inasmuch as the present time is that which doth connect and continue the two parts of time, namely, the past and the future. And the continued state of this life is after the same manner expressed by the apostle in the—chapter of this epistle

to the Galatians verse 20. The life which I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God, he means not, that he only first began to live that life by an influence received from the Son of God, but that he lived from day to day that life which he did live, that spiritual, divine life, by faith in the Son of God, who had loved him and given himself for him.

Nor again must we understand this living to signify the series of actions only proper to that life : for they are afterwards signified by the name of walking in the other part of the text. It is true indeed, that living in a very common notion of it, does denote the continued series of the actions of one's life, whether good, or bad, both in Scripture and in ordinary language : If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, (Rom. 8. 13.) that is, if ye continue to act, or walk, or converse after the flesh, according as that corrupt principle doth incline and dictate, ye shall die. The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that—we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ; that is, act and walk and converse so. Titus 2. 11, 12. And in common speech we use to say such a man lives a good or a bad life, intending by living, the course of his actions whether good or bad. But this cannot be the meaning of living here for the reason before mentioned ; and should we so understand it, there would neither be argument, nor indeed congruity in the apostle's way of expressing himself ; for it would amount to no more than this : If ye continue to live in the Spirit, continue to live in the Spirit ; or if ye continue to walk in the Spirit, continue to walk in the Spirit. Wherefore it is necessary that we conceive a middle sense between these two, namely, the first reception of the principle of life, and the continued series of the actions of that life ; and that middle sense is, (as hath been already intimated) the continuation of the vital principle itself. If ye live, that is, if ye have the principle of a new and divine life continued and maintained in you, walk in the Spirit as those principles would direct and guide you to do. Again

3. We must note that by Spirit, or the Spirit, is manifestly meant the blessed eternal Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. It cannot be meant of our natural spirit as is most evident : nor can it be meant of the new creature itself, which is in the Scripture called spirits ; (as we have had occasion lately to take notice again and again) for of the same Spirit which is here spoken of you have an enumeration of the fruits in the verses immediately foregoing : The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, meekness, temperance, &c. These we are sure, are not the fruits of our own natural spirit ; neither can they be said to be

the fruits of the new creature, for they are the new creature itself, those very principles whereof the new creature is composed and doth consist. It is therefore manifest that by the Spirit we must understand the divine eternal Spirit, the blessed Spirit of God itself.

And for that form of expression "in the Spirit," that particle, commonly denotes a causative influence, and signifies as much as *by*; as though he had said, If ye live by the Spirit. Many instances might be given, and have upon some other occasion been given, to shew that the particle *in*, doth sometimes signify *by*, and denotes the influence of an efficient cause. But then it must be noted too, that it denotes the part of an efficient cause, or, a causal influence with a great deal more emphasis than if another form of expression had been used. "If ye live in the Spirit:" Why it imports the continual vital immediate presence of the Spirit for this purpose, to maintain this life. "If ye live in the Spirit:" as if the soul had its very *situs*, its situation in a region of life which the Spirit did create and make unto it. As sometimes the continual present power, and dominion and influence of wickedness, or some wicked principle, is expressed the same way, by being in the flesh. When we were in the flesh, under the power and regnancy of any corrupt, fleshly principle, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. Rom. 7. 5. And, Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, as it is said to Simon Magus. Acts 8. 23. And, The world lies in wickedness: so as to be continually receiving in and imbibing wickedness, as it were on every hand. 1 John 5. 19. In like manner the soul is represented as imbibing life and vital influence on every part; agreeably unto which notion, some (and those I may reckon the best of) philosophers have been wont to say, that it is a great deal more proper to speak of the body of a man as being in his soul, than of the soul, as in the body; that the body is in the soul, as being continually clothed with vital influence on every part, and which it diffuses throughout, the soul being as an element of life unto the body all the while they do converse, life extending even unto all the extremities, unto the most extreme part of the body that you can suppose. So is the soul spoken of here in reference to the Spirit of God; though that very intimate union is frequently held forth to us in Scripture by a kind of reciprocal and mutual in-being of one in the other, and the other in that. "He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him;" they do, as it were, inhabit one another. So it is with the Spirit of God and the soul that spiritually lives by it; it is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in it. It is not so in

the Spirit, as if there were any thing of itself, more intimate to it than the Spirit is ; but the Spirit doth as it were clothe it with life, fill it with life, and is all in all of life to it.

So much therefore is now clear to you, that the truth which we have observed hath a very adequate ground in the text. "If ye live in the Spirit," since ye do so. It is a thing to be concluded, that the life of those who are christians indeed, who have ever come to be spiritually alive, is to be maintained and continued by a constant influence of the blessed Spirit.

II. Now that we may open the truth of the thing that is asserted and contained in these words, it will be requisite to speak distinctly,—concerning the life that is to be maintained, and—concerning the influence that maintains it.

1. Concerning the life to be maintained. Of that I have need to say the less because we have had occasion to speak largely of it heretofore. What it will be needful to say, you may take in these few propositions.

(1.) We are not to understand it of natural life, no, not even of the soul itself ; but we are to understand it of life in a moral sense, or if you will in a spiritual and divine ; I intend one thing by the expressions. It is called indeed the divine life, or the life of God in plain terms, Eph. 4. 18. Being alienated from the life of God, having no share, no participation in the divine life, in God's life.

(2.) As life in the natural sense is a principle of action ; so life in the moral sense is a principle of *right* action, or by which one is enabled to act aright. The soul of a man is naturally a living, vital, active being, it is naturally so, that is, it belongs to its very essence to be capable of acting. But to be disposed to act aright, though that was in some respect natural to it too, yet it was not inseparable, as sad experience has taught us all. Though the spirit of a man be a living, and consequently an active being, made such by God in the first constitution of it, it is not to be supposed that he turned such a being as this loose into the world, when he made it, to act at random and according as any natural inclination might carry it, or external objects move it, this way or that ; but it being not only a living, an active substance, but intellectual also, and thereby capable of government by a law, that is, of understanding its Maker's will and pleasure, and directing the course of its actions agreeably thereto, God hath thereupon thought fit to prescribe it a law, or set it rules to act and walk by. Now the mere power to act is life natural, but the disposition or ability to act aright is a supervening life, by which the soul is as it were contempered and framed agreeably to the

law by which it is to act, or the divine government under which it is placed.

(3.) The prime and fundamental law which enters the constitution of the divine government over reasonable creatures is, that they love the Author of their beings, his own blessed self, above all things ; and consequently as that love doth dictate most directly, that they be devoted and subject unto him as the supreme authority, and that they delight and take complacency, and seek rest and blessedness in him as the supreme good ; both which are included in that one root or principle of love. I am to love him, and love him above all, and then I do of course willingly and with cheerfulness devote myself to him, being acted by the power of that love so to do, and seek blessedness in him as the most suitable, the most agreeable good to my soul.

This is but the very sum and substance of the first commandment, which we are to look upon as fundamental to all the rest : for it were a vain thing to prescribe any farther laws as a God to those who will not take him for a God to them.

This was therefore the natural method to begin the law, the frame of laws and constitution of government, over reasonable creatures with this grand precept, "Thou shalt have no other God but me." That is, "I will be to thee the prime object of thy love, which love shall make thee devote thyself to me, and then make thee delight and take complacency in me as the supreme, both authority and goodness." Wherefore,

(4.) This life which we are now to consider as to be maintained, must principally and chiefly consist in the love of God ; that is, a propension of soul towards him above and beyond all things else. It is a conformity unto that grand precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ;" a direction or bent of spirit towards God. So long, or so far a person is said to live spiritually, as the main bent of his heart is toward God. If he fall from God, or in what degree soever he doth so fall, so far he dies ; there is a gradual death according to all the gradual declensions of the heart from God. God is the great term of this life, as we have had occasion to inculcate formerly. When it is intended to be spoken of, it is not spoken of as an absolute thing, but is distinctly spoken of as a life that relates and refers to God. Alive to God, (Rom. vi. 11.) and it follows, ver. 13, Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, yield yourselves living souls unto God. And the apostle speaking of that life, which he says he did live by faith in the Son of God ; (Gal. ii.) speaks of it as a life terminating upon God, "I through the law am dead unto the law

that I might live unto God, ver. 19, in the next verse to which you read, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," it is a life that comes to me from and through Christ, and points my soul directly upon God, so as that I live to him.

(5.) This life doth also comprehend all other gracious principles beside that great radical one of love to God, which suit the spirit of a man to all the other parts of the divine law, or all the other laws besides. Whatsoever gracious habit or disposition doth attempt and reconcile my spirit to this or that part of the divine will revealed in his law, that I must understand to be a principle included within the compass of this life to be maintained. For we find the expression used to signify the impress of the whole frame of holiness upon the soul; it is but a diverse expression of the work of the new creature, which we find expressed again and again in Scripture by putting the law in men's hearts. To put the law into the heart, why, that is to form the new creature there, and so continue that impression upon the heart and maintain it there, or to continue the life of the new creature in the soul. Whence therefore that law so impressed and made habitual in the spirit of a man is called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8. 2. And hence also those fruits of the Spirit which we find mentioned in this chapter and immediately before the text, are to be conceived as so many vital principles all belonging to the constitution of the new creature, and all of them serving to conform the spirit of a man unto the divine law. After the mention of all those several principles which are called the fruits of the Spirit, it is said, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit," that is, if we have all these fruits which are so many living principles put by the Spirit of God into us, if we have them, and they are continued and kept alive in us; then let us walk in the Spirit; act and do according to these principles.

(6.) We must farther note, that not only the continued being of all those vital principles which are called the fruits of the Spirit, but also the gradual improvements of their life, vigour, liveliness do all belong unto this life considered according to the more perfect state of it. For there is no degree of this or that thing, but hath the nature of the thing in it, and doth belong to the nature of the thing. And therefore I say, that by life here we must understand not barely the being of these principles continued in the soul, but supposing that the soul hath been improved and grown unto some strength and vigour, whatsoever maintenance it is to expect of that good state unto which it is arrived, that is under the name of life, here attri-

buted to the Spirit, as it is its proper work to hold the soul in life ; according as we use to say, speaking concerning the natural life, *non vivere, sed valere vita est*, merely not to be dead, is hardly worth the name of living ; but to be in health, to be strong, and lively and vigorous. We must conceive it to be within the compass of the Spirit's work, and therefore we put it within the compass of the object to keep up souls in a lively and vigorous state, and not only having put vital influences into them, merely to preserve them from being extinct. When we find that severe animadversion, Rev. 3. 1. Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead, it appears by what follows that he doth not mean by death there, simple death, as if there was nothing of life left, but a gradual deadness, a very languishing state ; for it follows, " Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," (ver. 2.) implying that to live so languid a life was hardly worth the name of living ; they were rather to be called dead, than living, while the case was only so with them. Therefore though it be true, that such a languishing is that which doth befall many a christian who hath the *root* of life in him, yet if it be better with any, and if they be continued in a better state, it is to be attributed to the Spirit of God ; they " live in the Spirit." If they live more prosperously, if their souls flourish, and are in a good condition, and are kept on therein, it is all owing to this Spirit ; but it is owing to men's ownelves if they be in languishings and decays, that they conform not themselves to the rules and methods of the Holy Ghost in which they are to expect, and according to which they may look for its supplies, whereof we shall have occasion hereafter to speak.

(7.) This life must be understood to include too, not only the principles of grace, and the vigour and liveliness of those principles ; but also the consolations, the pleasures, the grateful relishes of divine and spiritual things which are proper to the new creature also. For it is usual to distinguish both of the life of grace, and the life of comfort, as comprehended under the same name of life in the general. We many times find the expression used to hold forth to us any consolation that a good soul hath given into it upon whatsoever spiritual account. We live, says the apostle, if ye stand fast in the Lord, 1 Thes. 3. 8. It is as a new life to us, a revival upon a distinct and superadded account, unto whatsoever doth more naturally and necessarily concern the very being of our life. And therefore according to what measures and degrees such pleasures, and consolations, and joys are afforded unto good souls ; we must understand them all attributed unto the Spirit

of God, under the expression of our living in the Spirit, or living by it.

(8.) As the tendency of this life is towards God as the term of it, so the root of it is from God, as the great Author and Fountain of it. It must be understood to be the life of God, or the divine life, upon both these accounts, not only as it is a life that terminates upon him, but as it is a life that rises and springs from him, even in the very first rise of it: for none can tend towards God but by him, by a power and inclination that is received from him, by which he draws and acts the soul towards himself. As was noted before, that very life by which the apostle says he did live to God, he says he received it by faith from the Son of God, who had loved him, and given himself for him. And therefore,

(9.) This life doth necessarily suppose union with God, with Christ and with the Spirit of God. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 17. Whosoever it is that is joined to the Lord, is caught into a union of spirit with him, and that Spirit is the continual source of life to him. It is not only vain and unintelligible, but most monstrously blasphemous to imagine such a thing concerning this union as if it were an essential union with God, or a personal union with any of the persons in the Godhead: the former would make any one God; the latter would make us more one with that person, than the persons are with one another; for we cannot say that the person of the Father is the person of the Son, or that the person of the Son is the person of the Holy Ghost, the union is in essence, not in person. And therefore to talk as some have done of being personally united to Christ, or with the Spirit of Christ, imports as if they were more one with Christ, than Christ is one with the Father, or than the Father is one with the Spirit; for personal union is that, the result whereof is one person; and so the two natures of Christ are united. But a real union there is of those, who live this divine life, with him who is the great origin and principal of it; for it were a most unreasonable and unintelligible thing, that a man should live by a principle of life that is disunited from him. There must always be a union between the thing which lives, and that which it lives by. I cannot live by a vital principle that is remote from me, or wherewith I am not, in one sense or another, united. And it were very absurd to think that such words should be put into the Bible to signify nothing, or carry no sense with them, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit." Nor can that union, though it doth not signify so much as an essential, or a personal union (both which as I have said to you, are absurd and blasphemous) carry

so little as a mere presence of God, for he is equally present to all, more intimate to every creature than it is to itself; but it doth over and beside carry this, that there is a divine presence specified by such ends, for which it is vouchsafed upon such peculiar terms, upon which such a presence is not vouchsafed to others; that is, he is present to them with whom he is thus united, as a spring and principle of life to them; he is present for this very purpose, to form them for himself, to incline, and to continue their souls inclined towards himself, and so more and more gradually, to dispose and fit them to glorify him, to be the instruments of his glory and to be glorified with him, or to be the subjects of his glory; this is the special end for which he is present, and which doth distinguish his presence. For we cannot (as was said before) suppose that *ex parte Dei*, on God's part, one part of himself can be more present than another, for that were to make God to differ from himself; but, with reference to the effects and ends, which such an influential presence doth work, there is a difference; he is present so, as to do such a work in those, to whom he is thus present, as he will not, as he doth not do in others; so as to be the continual spring of such motions, and, such workings and tendencies, as others, where he will not so exert his influence, are strangers to. And then he is present with them too upon terms suitable to those ends; that is, as having bound himself to them to be their God, and so to be all that to them which it belongs to him to be, as he undertakes to be the God of any. He is their God, engaged to be with them by his continual vital presence through time, and in all eternity. Such a union, that is, an intimate presence for such purposes, and upon such terms, is supposed in this life, and therefore must be supposed to be maintained and continued all the while this life is continued; that is, the soul is held with God and kept close to him by bonds of union, kept firm and tight between him and them.

Thus you have some account of the first of these heads which we proposed to open to you, namely, the life to be maintained. It would become us to make some present reflection upon what hath been said at this time; and that is, since we have heard so much said concerning such a life as this, (and more heretofore) "certainly there is such a life." The thought offers itself, that such a life is not merely talked on, or is not a mere empty notion, but there must certainly be such a real thing. This distinct sort of life, though besides what other kinds of life are more obvious to the common notice of the world, is indeed a hidden life, a secret life, your life is hid with Christ in God, Col. 3. 3. But the hiddenness of the

thing doth suppose it to be, for that which is not, cannot be hid; so far is it from carrying a supposition or an inference that it is not. We ought therefore to possess our souls of this apprehension (think men of this matter what they will) there is really a certain sort of life which doth distinguish a holy man from a mere man, as truly, as there is a natural life which doth distinguish a mere man from a carcass, from the deserted trunk and body of a man. And when we consider so, how can we forbear to lay our hands upon our hearts, and ask ourselves the question; "Do I live this life, yea, or no? Do I feel myself to live? Do I feel an inclination and bent of heart towards God: some principles of life, springing up from that divine root, which carries my soul towards that blessed object: that I am acted from God to God in my ordinary course?" We cannot have a greater question or of more concernment in all this world, to deal with our souls about, and therefore let it be seriously thought of.

SERMON X.*

WE are upon the first act of the Holy Spirit in reference to souls born of it, held forth to us in this scripture, namely, in the supposition, from whence we have observed—That the blessed Spirit of God doth by its own influence maintain the life, whereof it hath been the Author unto regenerate souls.

And here we propounded to speak, —of the life to be maintained, and—of the influence which maintains it. Of the former we have spoken already and are now to go on

2. To the latter. Concerning which we shall—shew what kind of influence it is ; and—how it is ascertained unto regenerate souls. Or, give you some account of the nature and of the certainty of it.

(1) Of the former you may have some account by considering such properties of it as those that follow, namely,

[1.] It is a most free and arbitrary influence. It is a most gracious influence you know, in the very notion whereof the purest liberty is implied, wherein it has first to do with souls, as is subjoined to the Scripture before discoursed of in John 3 8. It is represented as “the wind that bloweth where it listeth.” In operations of this kind the Spirit delights to discover and magnify a kind of sovereignty and royalty. It is a very awful word which hath reference, as we find, unto that consideration, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, in Phil-

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2. 12. The consideration is immediately added, that "God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And I conceive there are two things hinted to us in that expression, namely, that whatsoever he doth of this kind, he doth with delight, taking a complacency in it, and enjoying, as it were, his own act; "he exercises loving-kindness in the earth," and in no kind or manner of operation so as in this, because herein he doth delight. And it also intimates, that what he doth herein, he doth upon no obligation; he doth at the rate of most absolute liberty, so as that he might do, or might not do. *Liberrimum est quod potuit non fuisse, that is free which might not have been.* "He works of good pleasure," having no other tie upon him than what he takes on and lays upon himself; and therefore "work out your salvation," saith the apostle, "with fear and trembling." He works now, you do not know whether he will by and by, if you neglect him now. Therefore is the blessed Spirit mentioned with that distinguishing title of the free Spirit, Uphold me with thy free Spirit, Psal. 51. 12. It is not only efficiently so, as the great Author of liberty unto those souls upon whom it works effectually, and with saving operations, as is the sense of what we find said in 2 Cor. 3. 17. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, liberty communicated by it unto those, who by the Spirit of the Lord, as it after follows, beholding as in a glass his glory, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. Whilst it refines them, it enlarges them, defecates them, makes them capable of ascending, and renders them some way adequate to a large, universal, all comprehensive good; it is not, I say, only so a free Spirit, but it is in itself free, a Spirit that so works as was not to be expected, and that cannot be prescribed unto. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? Isa. 40. 13.

[2.] It is a very various influence, in the degrees of its communication and operation. It may well be so, as being most free. It is not communicated alike unto all who have been born of this Spirit, nor to all those, nor to any of them, alike at all times. Some have more light and joy, more strength and vigour than others have; and the same persons have themselves their more lucid and turbid intervals, and in their time there is often a very quick succession of night and day; there is sorrow in the night, and a calm in the morning, and quick interchanges of such darkness and light, as in 30. Psalm. 5. Which variations do proceed partly, from sovereignty, as hath been said; but partly also from paternal justice. From sovereignty we may suppose, in great part, this Spirit comes and goes, even as it will, as to its more observable communications,

to discover its liberty: but oftentimes it varies the course of its dispensation, and the state of the soul with whom it hath to do, in a way of paternal justice. For as we know that there is such a thing as economical justice as well as political, among us, so there is a justice too which the holy God doth exercise in his own family, and among the children which have been begotten and born of him, as well as towards those who are under his government upon a more common account: and it is very meet and reasonable it should be so. It were a most incongruous thing, if he should be equally indulgent unto the careless and vain, and wanton, and extravagant, and the negligent of him and their own duty; as to the serious, and watchful, and diligent, and those who are most studious to please him, and most in love with his presence. He doth in his displeasure many times withdraw and hide himself, for the rebuke of negligences and undutiful deportments towards him; and he doth upon the account of the same justice shew, or manifest himself (as our Saviour's expression is in John 14. 21.) for the encouragement and reward of those that do more closely and faithfully adhere to him, and make it more their business and study to please and imitate him. The Spirit is often grieved, and in a degree quenched by the carelessness, and neglects and resistances even of its own offspring, or of those who have been born of it; and then the discipline of the family doth require that they should be put to rebuke; and so its influence comes to be an often varying thing.

[3.] Yet it is so far a continual influence as is necessary for the maintaining of the root of this life, that that may not totally wither; and therefore at the lowest ebb of those who are the offspring of this Spirit, there is still a sustaining influence upon them. As it was very low with the psalmist in the 73. psalm, when he was just ready to throw up all: Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, verse 13. He thought it was to no purpose to be any longer religious; he was become in the temper of his spirit so unlike a saint, that he judged himself, upon reflection, to be a great deal more like a beast. And yet he says in the 23rd. verse, that he had been ever with God, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." Even all that while there was a presence of God continued, and he was even then held by his right hand. So are the souls of his held in life, which holdeth our soul in life, Psalm 66. 9. Though that might have another, yet it is probable enough to have a spiritual meaning, and there are passages in the context that may incline us to apprehend so.

[4.] It is a still, silent, a secret, and often an unobserved influence; such as by which no great noise is made, and many

times doth escape the notice of them who are the subjects of it. Their life is a secret kind of life, "hid with Christ in God," and by such a kind of influence it is maintained. God is near many times, when it is not known. He was in the very place (and we cannot think that Jacob meant it, by his essential presence, for that he very well knew, but by his gracious presence) and he says that he knew it not. As though he had said, "I little thought of God's being so nigh." Gen. 28. 16. And we may at least, allude to those words, in Hos. 11. 3. I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. He deals so with those who are born of him, as even to teach them to go, and they know not that it is he that carries them all along. The operation of the Spirit doth very much imitate that of nature, it is in a very still and silent way that the sap is drained in by the root, and ascends up the trunk of the tree, and diffuses itself to every branch, so that we may see that it lives, but we do not see how. The case is with souls that are brought to live in the Spirit, as with very infirm and languishing persons, who have been consumed, and even next to death in a putrid and corrupt air; being removed into such as is pure and wholesome they revive, but in a very insensible way: so is this life preserved by a vital, spiritual influence, which is as pure air to them, a gentle, indulgent, benign and cherishing air; they live by it, and never a whit the worse, because it is not so turbulent as to make a noise.

[5.] As still and silent as it is, it is yet a very powerful and efficacious influence. The case requires that it should be so; for it is a great thing to maintain such a life upon such terms. A thing that is so purely divine, if it were not maintained by a strong hand, it were hardly to be thought how it should subsist in such a region as this, so every way unsuitable to it; it is a life continually assaulted, often struck at; a life employed in continual conflicts and crowned with many a glorious victory, and that implies a mighty power to be employed to preserve life and maintain it. When I am weak, then am I strong. 2. Cor. 12. 10. Sure he must be weak in one respect, and strong in another: weak, he must mean spiritually too: weak, if you consider the principle in itself, absolutely; strong, if you consider it in reference to the continual aids and supplies that are given in. And it is plain that the exercises of this life require, that strength and might should be employed to maintain it through them. Very difficult and hard things they are, which those who live this life are exposed to the suffering of, and merely because they live this life, and hold it forth that they are, in this sense alive: as no body goes about to wound

a dead man, there is no need of that. Therefore is that rapturous prayer of the apostle in Col. 1. 11, 12. that they might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, who had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Made them meet, by making them sons, and to inherit as sons, or to receive the inheritance of the saints in light. They were born light, and of light, Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, Ephes. 5. 8. Why, that being supposed, it required, as the apostle's prayer implies, an exertion of mighty, glorious power, to maintain this life unto that pitch and degree, that they might have a greater disposition to give thanks for what God had done upon them, to make them meet and capable subjects of such an inheritance, than to complain of a little suffering. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power," with such a kind of might as bears the very impress and image upon it of God's own glorious power itself; a might that has a glory upon it, and accords to its original: as you may suppose the effect, in such causations as this, to be very like to the cause, and to the productive influence. The new creature, as soon as it is born, is born to conflict, toil and travel; born for fight, and born for victory. Such were the heroes, the sons of God. One so highly born, we must suppose born for great things; not only to enjoy, but to perform; and there must be a power proportionable hereunto to go with this heaven-born creature. I have written unto you, young men, says the apostle, because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, 1 John 2. 14. Whilst they were yet but young, they had so great a conquest to glory in. "Ye have overcome the wicked one," *ye*, calling them by the name of little ones, a lower rank being designed by that expression: he yet tells them, that they had overcome, because greater was he that was in them, than he that was in the world, chap. 4. 4. And in chap. 5. 4. he says, that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. The predication is so universal, that we can conceive no state of a person born of God, be he never so newly born, but he is, even in that instant, made superior over this world, hath got the better of it, made his escape from the corruptions of it, which would hinder him through lust, and hath it in a degree under his feet: and therefore it must be a powerful influence, by which his life is maintained. Who are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. 1 Pet. 1. 5.

[6.] It is a connatural influence, or suitable to the nature of man both as reasonable and renewed. As reasonable, it doth

it no violence, I drew them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love. Hos. 11. 4. And it is accommodated unto all the principles of the new nature. It is an influence of faith to faith, of love to love, of meekness to meekness, and of humility to humility, as was intimated formerly.

[7.] It is a co-operative, or assisting influence. Such as doth engage us in the endeavour of preserving our own life, and then assists or co-operates with us therein. As the matter is in reference to the reflex acting of the soul, so it is, in proportion, in reference unto the direct. As when he would know what is wrought and done, or what impressions are made within, the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, in that reflex way of operation. Rom. 8. 16. So it, proportionably, doth in the direct way of operation to, it works with our spirits, and makes use of their own agency, in order to the maintaining of their own life. And therefore as you have heard in that now-mentioned scripture, that we are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation, so we are told too in 1 John 5. 18. that he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not; he keeps himself from those deadly, mortal touches which would endanger his precious life; that is, he is his own underkeeper. We are every one to be a brother's keeper, much more to ourselves; but still in a subordinate sense, subservient to, and dependent upon that supreme one. Indeed it were a kind of a monstrous thing in the creation, that there should be so noble a life planted there, but destitute of the self-preserving faculty or disposition; whereas every life, how mean soever, even that of a worm, a gnat or a fly, hath an aptitude in it, or a disposition accompanying it, to preserve itself.

[8.] It is a regular and an ordinate influence. I put these together, because they have an affinity, though they may import somewhat diverse notions. The Spirit works according to rule, or agreeably unto the word, in what it does for the maintaining of this life. My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart, Isa. 59. 21. The word and the Spirit go together among all this race. The Spirit breathes in the word for the maintaining of this life. And so it is the influence of ordinate, not of absolute power, which works so as that there is no proportion between what it works, and what it works by; it works by apt and suitable means, and applies and directs our spirits unto such objects as are apt to be nutritive, or carry in them a suitable aliment for the maintenance of this life. Why, our natural life is maintained by a divine influence too; we could not otherwise draw breath, or subsist a moment. But how is it maintained?

Not by miracle. Not in such a way as doth supersede all useful means for that purpose: but it is maintained by God's preserving and directing the natural faculties that belong to us, unto such objects as are suitable for the maintaining of natural life, and may be aptly nutritive thereof. He doth not maintain this life of ours without eating, or drinking, or breathing; by an influence exclusive of all such means, nor without apt and suitable means too: for it is not maintained by feeding upon iron, or stones, or by drinking of poison, or by breathing in contagious airs, but by what is agreeable to itself, and apt to afford a suitable aliment to it. So it is in the spiritual life also; it is not maintained by an influence that doth exclude apt and proper means, but by this influence the mind and spirit is directed to intend and converse with such objects, out of which it can draw nourishment, and which are suitable unto this purpose. God doth not maintain this life in such a way, and upon such terms, as that, though men mind nothing in the world else, but what the men of this world do, they shall live well notwithstanding. It is not strange if they who feed upon husks, who converse with nothing but shadows, and pant only after the dust of the earth, are very languishing souls. Things altogether insipid, that have no sap, or juice or savour in them, formalities of religion, doubtful opinions, disputes about minute and inconsiderable things, airy notions that are apt to drop, or distil nothing upon the spirit of a man, are not the things that this life is likely to be maintained by.

And this influence is such as doth work by likely and apt means, as it enableth the soul to savour those things which are called the *τα πνευματος* *the things of the spirit*, as you have it in Rom. 8. 5. They that are after the flesh, do mind (or savour) only the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit; and so they live by good, and suitable and savoury food, being made capable of savouring that food. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; *αδολον γαλα*, *that pure undecentful milk*, as the word there imports. 1 Pet. 2. 2. The way therefore in which the Spirit doth maintain and improve this life, and afford vigour to it, is by leading the soul often into heaven, and making it to converse in the invisible regions; and to forget this world, and that it hath any relation to it, when it converses with God in spirit, and is made to look (for it draws down its nutriment even by the eye) by faith into the things that are unseen and hoped for; whereof that faith is the very substance and evidence too.

[9.] This influence is gradually perfective of the whole soul. Such as tends to improve it; such as by which it is still grow-

ing up to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, Eph. 4. 13. We infer upon all that hath been said, that there is such a life as this. A very obvious inference, but it is very sad that it should be needful to make it. For alas ! how hardly and slowly does it enter into the minds of most, that there is such a thing, notwithstanding all those many and great things which the word of God is full of concerning it ! It is very strange that we should have such accounts in Scripture of the way of begetting it, of the nature and tendency of it, how it is maintained, what the operations of it are, what the enjoyments, what the pains which it doth at any time suffer, what its improvements, and what it shall end in at last, namely, eternal life ; and that still it should be disbelieved by them, who will not profess to believe the Bible a legend, that there is such a life. They must too certainly disbelieve that there is any eternal life ; for nothing can be plainer, than that the life, which shall never end, must sometime begin. But against so clear evidence there is nothing to be opposed, but ignorance and inexperience ; “ We know no such matter, and therefore we will not believe it, say about it what can be said.” But what strange folly is this ! What rashness ! Such as any prudent man in another instance would censure and damn for the most vain, foolish and preposterous rashness. If any man shall say, that he will not believe that there is in another, such or such an excellency, superior to what is in himself, because he does not experience the same thing in himself, he would be thought fitter to be hooted at, than confuted. We do not reckon brutes capable judges of the perfections and improveableness of the nature of men ; nor do we think one man a competent judge of what is in the spirit of another. What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him ? so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2. 11. Such as have been exercised about such matters can tell you much of the pleasure of philosophical knowledge ; and divers can tell you of the strange things that are performable by mechanical, and chymical powers and operations. Who would not think that countryman very ridiculous, who because he knows nothing at all of these matters, will therefore deny that there are any men in the world, that are of more excellent skill and judgment than himself, about things of such a nature ? He does not know what belongs to chymistry, and therefore he will not believe there is any chymist. He knows not what belongs to astronomy, and therefore he does not think there is any such skill as astronomical skill. This is a piece of folly which confutes itself, when men have no more to say, why they will not admit

that there is a divine life, a life come from heaven, than that they feel in their own spirits no workings of any such life. They may know indeed how the case is with themselves ; that there is no such thing as life springing in them, that carries their hearts to God, and makes them still seek nearer and nearer union with him, thirst after his presence, and long to be near him ; that carries them up often into heaven, and fills them with heavenly joy and solace in the foretaste of that blessed expected state ; they may know, I say, that there is no such thing in their own hearts. But what ! will you therefore judge there is no such thing in all the world ? As if your knowledge were the measure of all reality, and there could be nothing within all the compass of being, but what must be within the compass of your understanding and experience. This is the greatest folly that can be thought of. We do not use so foolishly to conclude, when we hear of the pleasures and delicacies of such, and such a country spoken of, in which we have never been, that there is no such thing, because we have not seen it with our own eyes ; or, there are no such fruits, because we have not relished them with our taste. It will be therefore of very great importance to us to fix the belief of this in our own souls, that there is such a life ; when the Spirit of the living God hath so much to do about it, and is continually attending it as his charge. Doth it employ itself about nothing ? But the time doth not allow to proceed.

SERMON XI.*

WE are speaking of the influence by which the divine life is maintained; and have already shewn what kind of influence it is. We are now,

(2.) To shew how it is ascertained unto regenerate souls, or, give you some account of the certainty of it.

[1.] It is ascertained by the relation they hereupon come to stand in to God. They are his children, his begotten ones. You know it is naturally every one's care to provide for those who have been born of them, unto whom they have been (though but the secondary) authors of life and being. And the apostle argues even in this very case from this reason, Rom. 8. 13, 14. If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: as though he had said, "Do you think that he will not care that his own sons shall live?" And the argument is yet more strong and enforcing, if you consider how this relation terminates, namely, more peculiarly and remarkably upon our very spirits; for so you find he is called the Father of spirits in contradistinction unto the fathers of our flesh, Heb. 12. 9. Therefore the relation leads to a more special care and concern about the life of our spirits, and most especially about that life of them, which is most imme-

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d'ately from him, and most resembles his own : not that natural life, which we have in common with the rest of men, but that life which is the more peculiar product of his own blessed Spirit, even as it is the Spirit of grace and of holiness. It is in that sense (as we have formerly shewn you at large) that we are said to be born spirit of spirit. It is only a production, or generation *secundum quid*, and in this peculiar respect, the thing produced being his own holy, living image, or a nature superadded to the human nature conforming unto his own in moral respects, and having been, in this so peculiar a kind, a Parent and an Author of life, it is not at all to be doubted, but the relation will draw with it the greatest care about that life which he hath given.

[2.] Add hereunto the paternal love which accompanies the relation. There is many times the relation of a father unaccompanied with the love of a father (though it is very unnatural where it is so) but here it is not so to be understood. It were horrid and blasphemous to think such a thought. Do we suppose him, who is the very Fountain of that natural affection which still descends and flows down, through all the successive generations of the world, in an ordinary stated course, from father to son, to be destitute of it himself; that there is a penury and want, or a failure in the very Fountain? Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, Psalm 103. 13. He is the very Fountain and Spring of all that kindness, and pity, and compassion and love, that did ever reside in the hearts of any parents towards their own children, he put and placed it there; therefore we are to conceive it in him, as in its highest original, and its proper and native seat, and therefore fully and most invariably there. And our Saviour's argumentation to this very purpose, how much doth it carry of convictive evidence with it? If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Spirit unto them that ask him? Luke 11. 13. And it is an instinct put into all that are of this divine progeny to be still looking up with craving eyes for this Spirit. It is the very sum of the desire of the new creature, it doth, as it were comprehensively enwrap all its desires; it is its very natural sense, "Lord, thy Spirit!" Though it is many times a silent and inexplicit prayer, yet it is as it were, the voice of that new nature, "more of thy Spirit." The exigency of the case speaks, the very langours and faintings of holy souls carry craving in them, though they have not so formed desires, that they can reflect upon them and take notice of them: even as the parched ground doth secretly supplicate to the heavens for

relief and supplies. Such we know the Psalmist's metaphor is once and again. And do we think that the Father of mercies (as he is called, as well as the Father of our spirits) will not hear the cries, and regard the necessities, even the crying necessities of his own (otherwise languishing and dying) offspring? He that feeds the ravens, will he starve souls? The very sea monsters draw forth their breasts, and do we think that there is less pity and compassion with God? The instinct is natural even in inferior nature, and stronger according as the order of being is more noble in which it is to be found. It is true, there may be among human creatures, some more than monsters, so prodigiously unnatural as not to regard the fruit of their own bodies. Lam. 4. 3. But suppose such a case; if a woman can forget her sucking child, and not have compassion on the fruit of her womb,—yet will not I forget; saith the Lord Isa. xlix. 15. I can never forget you: I have graven you upon the palms of my hands, as there it is explained. As if the design were to let us know, that he did make it a concern to himself never to forget, that he would always have a remembrancing token before his eyes, to make supply to the necessity of souls, as their case should require.

[3.] Some thought may possibly occur with some; that though it be true that a fatherly love doth commonly follow the relation, yet, where it hath been in much strength and vigour, possibly something or other may avert it, something may be done by a child to alienate the father's love; we have therefore a yet farther assurance from the divine wisdom and all-comprehending knowledge. From which it must be understood, that when he formed the design of raising up to himself, such a seed from among the lapsed children of men, he had the compass of it lying in view, and all things were present to his eye that should any way come to influence this design, or have any aspect upon it one way or another, whether to hinder or promote it: and yet it is manifest that he had such a design, and hath laid and fixed it, having all things in his view, even whatsoever might make most against it. Commonly if the minds and inclinations of persons do alter so, as that they come to disaffect, where heretofore they have borne a very peculiar love and kindness, it is upon some surprize that the alienation begins, something falling out unto them which was altogether unexpected: they did not think that such a one would have served them so and so, or have dealt so with them. But unto all-comprehending knowledge nothing is new. The blessed God had the entire prospect of his whole design, nor can we therefore suppose any thing that should alienate his paternal love, after he hath begun to exercise and express it, which he

had not obvious unto his notice before. He loves with an everlasting love, from everlasting, to everlasting: Having loved he loves to the end. John 13. 1. And whereas it may be also said, that though we should suppose a continuing love with a father towards his own children, yet he may be reduced to those straits that he cannot do for them as he would; the matter therefore is farther ascertained,

[4.] From his all-sufficient fulness. There is still the same undecaying plenitude of Spirit with him, that can never abate or grow less. It is a spring or fountain unexhausted and inexhaustible, that can never be drained or drawn dry. And therefore do we think, that those who have received this life from him shall not continue to live, when there is such love, and kindness, and compassion in conjunction with so rich and undecaying fulness? Methinks to any reasonable understanding this should make the matter very sure. Again,

[5.] We are farther ascertained by his express promise. And it is very considerable unto this purpose, how noted and eminent in the Scripture, especially in the New Testament (though we have divers instances too in the Old) the promise is of the Spirit. Indeed the matter is so represented to us, that we have reason to account, that as before Christ's coming, the coming of Christ was the great promise, and the hope of Israel; so after the coming of Christ in the flesh, the gift of the Spirit was the great promise, the promise of the gospel, Christ being (as then he was) actually come. It is therefore to be observed in Acts 2. 38, 39. that the apostle in that sermon calling upon his hearers (who were principally Jews, at least by religion) to repent, he tells them for their encouragement that they should "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: For the promise is unto you and to your children." Observe the connexion; the giving of the Holy Ghost is spoken of by him as the promise, which did virtually comprehend in it the sum of the gospel: and virtually it did so, for if that were once made good, all would be sure to be made good. And our Saviour speaks of this as what would be a greater good, a good that would more than compensate his own longer abode and presence in the flesh among his disciples: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you, John 16. 7. Certainly it could not be expedient to part with a greater good for a less; no, nor could it be said to be an expediency to part with an equal good for an equal: if then it were expedient that He should go, that the Spirit might come, that must be reckoned a good superior to his mere bodily presence and abode. And so the apostle plainly intimates in 2.

Cor. 5 17. compared with what goes immediately before, Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. He speaks of the matter with complacency, and with a kind of jubilation ; as though he had said, I do not desire to know him after the flesh any more, that is, in comparison of what he after speaks of, namely, that inward, vital, spiritual union with him, by which the whole frame of the new creation comes to spring up in the soul. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." And it is promised in John 14. 16. that this Spirit shall be given to abide with them for ever, in most exact correspondence unto the end and purpose for which he was to be given, (ver. 19.) to be the continual maintainer of their life. That must be a very constant thing to us which we are continually to live by, for if there were an intercision of life for a moment it would not be recovered. From the privation of a habit there were no return. He says therefore, "he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ;" so fully to answer the exigence of the case, that you shall be no moment destitute of his vital influence.

[6.] We are farther assured from the consideration of the divine faithfulness, without the consideration whereof the promise would signify little. For there are many promises made, and not kept ; but "he is faithful that hath promised." The promise of an unfaithful person gives very little assurance ; but we are to add to the consideration of the express promise of God, that it is most simply repugnant to the perfection of his nature to be capable of deceiving us. In hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie hath promised, Tit. 1. 2. And that eternal life is nothing else but this life, whereof the Spirit hath been the Author, continued and improved unto that blessed, eternal state, till it reach to that plenitude and fullness of life at length. A well of water springing up into everlasting life, John 4. 14. And God, that we might be assured that he will keep his word, hath added hereunto the ratification of his own solemn oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, there might be strong consolation to the heirs of promise, Heb. 6. 17, 18. And as I have said, this is the great promise, which is the very sum of the rest.

[7.] This continual vital influence is ascertained unto the regenerate by their union with Christ, considered in conjunction with—his being constituted and appointed a Mediator between God and them.—As he is Mediator, he comes to have all that should serve the necessities of their souls lodged in his

hand, and particularly to be the great treasury of spirit and life to them, and for them. All fulness, even by the Father's pleasure, dwells in him. But it may be said what is it to them, that Christ is full, that he is rich, that he lives, and that there is a fountain and treasury of life, and spirit in him? What! is it nothing to them? Why, consider that they are united to him, one with him. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 17. And that the inwardness of this union might be with more life represented to us, it is said in Ephes. 5. 30. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And do we think, that when such rich plenitude of spirit and influence is in that head, he will not diffuse it, and make it flow to those who are his members? that he will have any members to be cut off from him as totally dead?

[8.] This matter is ascertained from the consideration of the work inchoate or already begun. A great argument this, that the issue and good event of such a thing will certainly be brought to pass, even with wise, and prudent, and considering men. For there is no such man that doth begin a business which he will not carry through, if he be able. And therefore with the blessed God the argument is most strong. He hath been the Author of this life, by his Spirit, unto the souls that he hath renewed; and therefore surely he will continue, and carry it on, and bring it to the mature and perfect state at last unto which he hath designed it. See how the apostle argues in Phil. 1. 6. Being confident, (says he,) of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work will perform (or finish) it until the day of Jesus Christ. He is not of that light and uncertain temper, as, having begun such an undertaking as this, about which he hath expressed so much concern, and wherein it did appear his heart was so much engaged, to throw it off. Indeed the lubricity of a man's spirit makes him very susceptible of such a thing as this, to begin a design, and then be sick of it, grow weary, neglect it, and throw away all thoughts and concern about it, and divert to somewhat else; but it is most repugnant to the natural, essential perfection of the blessed God to be capable of such a change. He will not forsake his people (as Samuel speaks to the mourning Israelites in 1 Sam. 12. 22.) because it hath pleased him to make them his people. Though he sometimes seems, for the awakening of us out of our security, and the engaging of us unto that care and diligence, which the case requires, to represent himself, as if he were contesting with himself about this matter, whether he should continue the relation, and the care that belongs to it, yea, or no; yet we see how he answers himself in Jer. 3. 19. How shall I put thee among the child-

ren, &c? I said "Thou shalt (yet) call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me." He resolves that he would with the relation, continue in them an instinct always to look towards him as their Father. "Thou shalt look to me as thy Father, and shalt not turn away from me, and so will I preserve all things entire between thee and me."

These considerations taken together are sufficient to ascertain to a regenerate soul that may be solicitous about the state of its own case, that the influence shall be continued, which is necessary for the continued maintenance of that life whereof the Spirit of God hath been the Author.

The *use* that we shall make of this at present shall only be in some few practical inferences, reserving the farther use till after we have considered and opened the other doctrine from the latter part of the verse.

We have already (so far preventing ourselves) inferred,

1. That there is such a life as that which we are wont to call the life spiritual, distinct from, and to be superadded to the natural life of men. I insisted upon this before, and therefore do but mention it now.

2. We may farther infer, that this life is of a most excellent and noble kind. Of this we are taught to make a judgment by the way of its being maintained. What is it maintained upon? They that live this life, live in the Spirit: certainly this is a very high way of living, and speaks the life that is to be maintained so, and only maintainable so, to be a life of a most excellent and noble kind. The excellency of any life is to be measured and judged by the objects which are suitable to it, and nutritive of it, or, out of which it has its sustenance and support. They that do live this life, as they do so, can breathe no other but this pure and sacred breath. They "live in the Spirit." They live no where but in a region of vitality, filled with vital influence even by the eternal Spirit: this is to live at a very high rate. Think therefore how excellent a life that is which the blessed God doth distinguish his own children by, from other men.

3. Since this life is here spoken of as in this way to be continued—we learn, that it must certainly at some time or other begin. And therefore methinks this should be a rousing and awakening thought unto those who, when they hear of the ways and methods of maintaining and improving the spiritual life, have yet cause to suspect or doubt, whether as yet they have the very beginnings of it. Methinks it should be a chilling thought unto such a heart, "How much do I hear (may such a one say) of mighty things, things of very great and vast importance, which are all impertinencies to me, they signify

nothing, nor have any suitableness in them to my case! How great things do fall beside me!" So it must be with every one that hath not yet begun to live this life. What! not yet begun? Do we find so many things so industriously inserted into the Scripture, to instruct and direct us concerning the ways of exercising, maintaining and improving this life, and I not yet feel the very beginnings of it! O how much behind are men unto the whole order of christians, of those that are so indeed and in truth, and may deservedly admit the name! "Some are gone so far, and I am yet to begin my course!"

4. We hence see how great a perfection is lacking unto un-renewed souls. How great a perfection properly appertaining unto the spirit and nature of a man, and which ought to be found in it and with it. Why, there is a whole state of life yet lacking to them. A dismal thing to think of! It might fill a man with astonishment to think that he should be so far short of what a man ought to be, because he is not yet so much as alive towards God. You have at large heard what that life is by which we are said to live spiritually, and that it is not to be understood in a natural but in a moral sense. For admit that the spirit of a man is of itself naturally and essentially a self acting thing, yet it were not to be imagined that God would make such a creature, and turn it loose into this world to act at random: life therefore in this moral sense is a principle of acting regularly and duly towards God. And though there be the natural powers and faculties that belong unto the soul of a man, as it is such a creature in such a place and order of the creation, yet while they are destitute of that rectitude by which they are inclined to God, or apt to act and move towards him by rule and according to prescription, such a soul may as truly and fitly be said to be dead, or those powers and faculties of it to have a death in them, as the hand of a man's body, supposing it to retain its natural shape and figure, but to be altogether useless unto the ends and purposes for which such an organ was made: if it be raised up, it falls down a dead weight; he cannot move it this way, or that: you will say, this is a dead thing; yet it hath its shape still.

It is strange to see how far some have gone in the apprehensions of this matter by merely natural light. You know we spake of this life comprehending, with the principles of grace, the consolations, and pleasures, and joys which are apt to result and spring from thence. Alone to have such a life, is not enough to denominate a person to be a living person, but to be well; to be healthful and vigorous and strong. I remember Socrates I find to speak thus (as Zenophon reports of him) among his dying discourses concerning life in this moral sense,

“Do you ask (says he) what it is to live? I will tell you what it is. To live truly is to endeavour to excel in goodness; and to live comfortably, or joyfully is to feel one’s self to do so, or to feel one’s self growing better and better.” He calls those, persons that lived pleasantly, who felt themselves improving in respect of the good temper of their spirits. And I remember Philo-Judæus (though he had opportunity for much more light than the other) giving the notion of a man, as that which he would have commonly to obtain, says, that “no one ought to be reckoned a partaker of the rational nature, that has not in him hope towards God.” So he speaks of religion; and says plainly, that “he who hath this hope in him, he only is to be called a man, and that the other is to be looked upon as no man.” That was his notion. We may so far comport with it as to say, that there is certainly a great perfection, belonging to the nature of man, wanting to them that are yet not come to live this life. And it is amazing to think that such a perfection is wanting by privation, in the proper sense, and not by negation only. As how dismal a thing were it, should we suppose all the rational powers and faculties to be on a sudden cut off from the nature of a man, so that he is become a mere brute, he cannot think a thought, every thing of reason and discourse is become alien to him! And if we should suppose next the faculties of the sensitive nature to be cut off, and he, who was before a rational man, had the power of reason and speech, and could move to and fro and converse as a man, turned into a tree; life he has, but no better life than that: and if you would suppose that life gone too, and he at last turned into a stone; these were most dismal degenerations. It is no disparagement at all to what was originally a brute, to be a brute, or to a tree, to be a tree, or to a stone, to be a stone; for it has all the perfection that belongeth to such a creature, or to the order whereof it is in the creation of God. But when this life is lacking to the soul of man, there is a perfection lacking which did originally belong unto this order of creatures. For what! Do you think that ever God made man to disaffect himself? that he ever made a reasonable creature that should not be capable of loving its own original, and the supreme good? And whereas we find now that men do universally make themselves the centre of their own loves, do we think that ever God made man to do so? Why, it is a dreadful transformation then, that is come upon the nature of man, and a most amazing degeneracy. It would startle us, if we would but admit serious thoughts of it, that there should be an entire state of life so generally lacking among men. And especially, if any of us upon reflection, laying our hands upon

our hearts, do feel no movings of such a life, no beatings of a pulse God-ward and heaven-ward that may bespeak and be an indication of it. To think that I have such a thing lacking in me, that doth belong originally unto the nature of man; not so light and trivial a thing that, if I had it, it would add some kind of perfection to me which might conveniently enough be spared; but a whole orb and order is lacking to me which belong to such a creature as I. Certainly it should put such a person mightily out of conceit with himself, and make him think, "What a monster am I in the creation of God! I am no way suited to the order of creatures in which my Creator hath set me; for that was an order of intelligent creatures all formed to the loving, adoring, and praising, and serving the great Author of their beings, with open eyes beholding and adoring his excellencies and glory; and I have no disposition thereto."

5. We may farther infer how great a misery is consequent, where persons have not begun to live this life; there is a great perfection lacking in this life itself, but it infers a farther consequent misery, that is, a being cut off from all conversing with God, a kind of exile out of that region, which is within the management of the Spirit, the region in which it rules, and which it replenishes with life, and with vital influence: for being dead towards God they can have no converse with him. If a person be dead, you know what is usual, "Bury my dead out of my sight." They are not fit to come into God's sight or to have to do with him. Would we like it well to converse among the dead; or endure to have carcasses lying with us in our houses, and in our beds, and to be found at our tables? Why, the case speaks itself; they who are destitute of this life, are quite cut off from God, and from all his converse; they are as it were exiles from the world and region of spirit and spirituality. O the strength and vigour, the joys and pleasures, the purity and peace of that blessed region! But these are excluded by their want of this life. The Spirit can only statedly converse with those that are alive. It steps out of its region (the case were otherwise sad with us) to make men alive, and to draw them within the circle, as it were, that they may be within the reach of its continual ordinary converse. But they are in no way of converse with the Spirit, as yet, that have not the principles of this life as yet planted in them. So that they are to look upon themselves as cut off from God, and as those with whom his Spirit hath no converse in a stated way. What it may do, what it will do in a way of sovereign grace is more than they know; but it is their great concern to implore it, that it would come and move upon them,

and attemper them to the region of life. They are otherwise cut off as from the land of the living, and have no place nor fellowship there.

6. Let us see the wonderful grace of this blessed Spirit. Well may it be called the Spirit of grace, Who hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. 10. 29. We should frame our apprehensions accordingly of this blessed Spirit, as the light of such a scripture would dictate, and account it the Spirit of all love, and goodness, and benignity, and sweetness that admits such souls to have a livelihood in it. "If ye live in the Spirit;" O strange goodness this! Such impure creatures so lost in darkness and death, now brought within those blessed confines! That the Spirit of the living God should have taken them into such association with itself! As though he had said, "Come, you shall live with me: here is safe living, comfortable living." The communion which God holds with such souls is called the communion of the Holy Ghost in 2 Cor. 13. 14. That it should come and lead souls out of death and darkness into the divine presence, and say to them, "Dwell here, in the secret of the Almighty, and under the shadow of his wing. His feathers shall cover you, and his continual influence cherish you and maintain your life: here you shall spend your days!" This is a wonderful vouchsafement. How should we magnify to ourselves the grace of the Spirit upon this account! And yet farther,

7. We see the great hazard of withdrawing ourselves from under the tutelage and influence of this Spirit. It is done by neglect, done by self-confidence, done by remitting our dependance, done by resistance, by our disobedience, our little obsequiousness to the Spirit: and you see the hazard of it. Step out of this region of life, and there is nothing but impure and desolate darkness. We languish and die, if we retire, or recede and step without these sacred boundaries. To be confined and kept within them how great a vouchsafement is it! And, that it is undertaken that it shall be so! But though it shall be so, we are not to expect that this should be done without our care. We shewed you, in speaking of that influence, that it is an assisting and co-operative influence, among many other particulars.

Lastly, We may infer, that is a most weighty and important charge that lies upon every renewed soul. For think, how precious and excellent a life is to be maintained in them; that spiritual, divine life, a thing which both requires and justifies their utmost care: requires it; for what would a person think of it, if he should be intrusted with the care of the life of a prince, the child of a great monarch? If any of us had

such a charge committed to us, "I charge you with the life of this child, and to use your best care and endeavour for the nourishing of its life, and for the cultivating of it, and fitting it to the best purposes whereof it may be capable." How would this engage one's utmost diligence, that it is a very important life that is committed to my care. We have every one of us the care incumbent upon us of the life of a divine thing produced and brought forth in us, and which we are to apply the name first to, when we call ourselves the sons or children of God. There the name falls first; it is that divine thing that is his son, and we are only his sons or children upon the account of that. To have a divine life to maintain and cherish in my soul, as I may have a subordinate agency, under the Spirit in order thereto, how should it engage my utmost solicitude and care, that nothing be done offensive to this life, that every thing be done that may tend to preserve and improve it!

And as it requires our care, so it finally justifies it. A great many are apt to think, yea, and do often speak, reproachfully concerning those who do any thing to discover and hold forth the power and efficacy of such an inbeing life in them. To what purpose do these persons take so much more care than other men about their souls, and about their spiritual state as they are wont to call it? Why, they have a life more than you to be solicitous about; a life that you know nothing of; a noble, a divine life which it is incumbent upon them to care for. They wonder that this race of men do not run with them into the same excess of riot, when they never consider, these are things that would be noxious to my life. It may be you find nothing in you, unto which such things would be an offence: they would hurt my very life. This hath the holy soul to say to justify all that care and concern which he hath about the maintaining and preserving his spiritual life. And would not he be thought to talk every unreasonably that should say; why should such, and such men, who are observed to be much addicted to study, and retirement, and contemplation, why should they inure themselves to more thoughts than the beasts do? They, who apply themselves to a course of praying, meditation, &c. why should they do so more than the beasts, who, say they, do but eat and drink, and what is given them that they gather, and no more ado? The answer would be obvious from such persons: "I have a thing called reason in me, which I am to cultivate, and improve, and make my best of, which beasts have not." And is not that a sufficient answer; "I have a life more in me, than other men have, which I am to tend, and take all possible care of; a life capable of great

improvements, a life of great hopes, a life put into me upon high accounts, and for the greatest and most noble designs." And therefore if any of us be tempted by the licentious persons of the age to run their course, and do as they do, pray let us learn to distinguish our cases. The matter is not with us as it is with them. We have somewhat else in us ; a divine thing, which hath a sacred life belonging to it, implanted in our natures ; which hath given us hope, and which is in us the earnest and pledge of a blessed eternity ; an immortal state of life : And what ! Shall we be prodigal of this ? Is this a thing to be exposed, and ventured, and thrown away, merely to comply with the humour of a sensual wretch, who knows nothing of the matter, and is a stranger to all such affairs ?

SERMON XII.*

YOU have heard of a twofold work of the Holy Spirit upon such souls as it hath regenerated, or put a principle of spiritual life into, namely,—the maintaining of that life, which is mentioned in the former part of this verse, “If we live in the Spirit;” and—the causing, and conducting, and governing the motions which are agreeable to that life, in the latter part, “let us also walk in the Spirit.”—We have spoken of the former of these, and are now to proceed unto the latter, that is, to treat of that part or hand which the Holy Spirit hath, about the motions and actions of renewed souls; and these must be considered in a reference unto that life unto which they are con-natural, as you see they are mentioned in that reference in the text, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Therefore the latter truth which we have to note to you from this Scripture you may take thus;—That it belongs to their state, who live in the Spirit, to walk also in the Spirit.—In speaking to which we shall,

I. Shew, what it is to walk in the Spirit.

II. How it belongs unto the state of such persons so to walk.

I. What walking in the Spirit imports. This we may understand by inquiring severally into, and then joining together

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these two notions ; that is,—what walking doth import ; and then,—what it imports to do any thing in the Spirit.—These being explained and put together will give us the full and true import of walking in the Spirit.

1. Walking in the general, you know, is an expression that signifies action or motion ; and sometimes it is taken in a natural sense, and then you know what it signifies : sometimes it is taken in a moral sense, a sense borrowed from the natural, because of some analogy and agreement between the one and the other ; and then it plainly signifies the course of a man's conversation. So it must necessarily be understood to signify here, according to the transumed or borrowed sense. And nothing is more ordinary in Scripture than to express the course of a man's conversation, whether it be good, or whether it be bad, by the phrase of walking ; as you cannot but have taken notice, such of you as have been conversant with the Scriptures, how often it is said concerning the kings of Israel and Judah, that they walked so and so ; such, and such a one in the way of his fathers, and the like : where the series of his actions, morally considered, is most expressly intended to be signified.

But that we may speak more distinctly unto the notion of walking, because it will give much light unto the matter which we have before us ; as, in general, walking doth signify action or motion, so it also carries with it some specification of that action or motion, and so doth import action or motion of some special kind. For, though all walking is motion, yet all motion is not walking : and therefore it is an expression that serves to be some way restrictive of the general notion of action or motion. And that we may speak more clearly hereunto, we must take notice of something that walking doth *expressly denote*, or that is more formally included in the notion of it ; and somewhat that it doth *connote* or import by a kind of *col-lateral* signification thereof.

(1.) There are some things which walking doth more directly and formally denote. As

[1.] It denotes a self-motion. A motion which proceeds from an internal principle in the thing that moves : though not originally ; for that cannot be supposed concerning it in a creature, but subordinately only. If one rolls a stone to and fro upon the ground, it would be very improper to say, that stone walks. It signifies motion from an internal principle a kind of self-motion.

[2.] It doth most properly signify a voluntary motion. There may be motion from an internal principle which is not voluntary, as there are many things that have a principle of

motion in themselves, which have not the power of will ; which belongs only unto intellectual agents ; unto free creatures. Now if a man be dragged this way or that, he is not said to walk, though he make use of his own motive power too.

[3.] It imports an orderly motion. For he is not said to walk who only wildly skips and fetches freaks this way and that. And that signification is especially carried that is used for walking here, *στοιχεω* ; a word from whence that word *σιζ*, comes, which signifies military order, the orderly motion of any army in rank and file : so the word is noted to signify. Yea, and from the same word comes a word that signifies the order which is observed in verse, when the composition is most exact and accurate, of so many feet, or making up such or such a form of metre ; *δισυχω*. A metrical kind of order is signified by this word ; so as that one's motions are measured by a strict kind of rule all along.

[4.] It imports a pleasurable motion. For you know we are wont to walk for our recreation. If persons go a journey, or the like, that is toilsome, we express that more usually by another word, travelling : but if a person be gone forth to exercise himself in order to his recreation and health, then we usually say, he is gone a walking.

[5.] It is a continued motion. For he that fetches a skip and jump now and then, this way and that, is not said to walk ; but walking is a course of motion continued for such a time.

[6.] It is a progressive motion. There may be continued motion which is not progressive. One may continue moving to and fro, in the same place, for a long time together : but walking is a going forward. These things (as is obvious unto a common understanding) are carried in the notion of walking most expressly, and so it may be said to denote these things more formally. But

(2.) There are also some things which it doth connote. And they are especially these two, namely :—an *end*, and—a *way*.

[1.] It connotes an end ; for walking is a tendency some whither, or unto some term. And

[2.] It connotes a way ; for a man cannot walk, but it must be in some way or other, whether it be better, or worse.

These things are considerable concerning the notion of walking. And as walking doth import a specification of motion, or, is a more special kind of motion ; so the addition of “ in the Spirit ” plainly imports a specification of walking, so as to denote a more special sort and kind of walking.

2. We shall consider, more at large, what it is to do any thing

in the Spirit, before we come to sum up all in joining these notions together. To do any thing in the Spirit, is to do it in the light, and in the power of the Spirit.

(1.) In the light of the Spirit. For whenever it comes to deal with the spirits of men, it is in that way, by creating a light to them, which is directive of their motions. Let us walk in the light of the Lord, Isai. 2. 5. that is walking in the Spirit. To do any thing in the Spirit, is to do it in the light, not blindly and darkly as those that know not what they do.

(2.) In the power of the Spirit. I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only, Psalm 71. 16.

These things thus laid before you will make it plain to us what is carried "in walking in the Spirit."

3. We are to put together the notions of walking, and doing any thing in the Spirit. And an account of the result and sum of what has been said may be given you in these several particulars.

(1.) To walk in the Spirit is to intend and tend towards an end which is suitable to the Spirit. It is most proper to begin there; and that is, in short, walking in the Spirit imports a continual tendency towards God, as the great end and mark at which one aims. And this is an end agreeable to the Spirit; and this, and no other, as the last and ultimate end. The soul that is acted by the Spirit of God is acted towards God. Do but observe how these things are connected in that passage Psalm 63. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee. How comes it to do so? Thy right hand holds me up. And what is that right hand? Why, it can signify nothing else but the power of God, that is his Spirit, which we are taught to look upon as the great active principle of all the motions and operations of the creatures, whereof it can be said to be directly determinative. Then we may conclude that a person is acted by the Spirit, or walks in the Spirit, when he aims at God through his whole course. While men are under the power and rule of another, that is, a fleshly and corrupt principle, it is all for self that their designs lie, and the course of their actions run; they are confined wholly (as hath been said upon an occasion) within a circle of acting from self to self: but when once the Spirit of God comes to have the government and the motions of the soul, as all those motions do immediately spring from God, so they tend to him, and centre in him. The soul designs him, and none but him in its whole course. And therefore, it being the great work of the Redeemer to reduce and bring back souls to God, what part or

hand the Spirit of God hath in this matter, is in pursuance of the Redeemer's design. Therefore we are said to "have access, or come to God through him by the Spirit," this is the common course stated for all men; for Jew and Gentile both, for with such reference it is said, Through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father, (Ephes. 2. 18.) implying that none would ever come at God, aim at God, or tend towards him, but as, by the motive power, and in the directive light of the blessed Spirit, they are acted and carried towards him through Christ.

(2.) Walking in the Spirit implies a constant adherence unto Christ by dependance and subjection. Which it must needs do upon the account that all walking, as I have said, connotes a way, and Christ is expressly represented to us as the way leading unto God. I am the way, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14. 6. And hence, as we have this phrase of "walking in the Spirit," so we have that too of walking in Christ, Col. 2. 6. And the apostle Peter directs such a course of walking as might put them to shame who should falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ. 1. Pet. 3. 16. And certainly it is one great part of the work of the Holy Ghost upon the spirits of men so to attemper and frame them unto the way of access to God, or the way wherein God can be come at, that it may become even spiritually natural unto the soul to walk in that way. While they walk in Christ, they walk in the Spirit. It is the business of the Spirit to engage the soul in this way of tending and moving towards God, and to keep it on therein.

(3.) It imports walking in the divine light, whereof the Spirit is the continual Author unto renewed souls, And I do not now mean only that external light which it affords by the Scripture revelation, but an inward vital light which it sets up and continues in the soul itself, having caused "a day-spring, a day-star to arise there, and made a day within." The Spirit creates unto the soul a region of light, wherein it converses, while, it is said to converse in the Spirit. They unto whom it hath not created such a light, are said "to walk in darkness;" and whatsoever there is of external light shining round about them, their darkness comprehends it not, as in John 1. 5. But where this blessed Spirit is it makes those that were darkness to be light in the Lord. "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" well, and what then; Walk as children of the light, Ephes. 5. 8. It is true, that light doth here, as well as elsewhere, signify holiness, but not without reference unto intellectual light; only it imports that intellectual light to be a practical, refining, trans-

forming, vital light, so as that the same thing is capable of a twofold denomination, of light and of life too; as St. John speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, speaks of him as under the notion of life, and saith, that life was the light of men, John, 1. 4. It is therefore a region of living light which the Spirit doth create unto souls, in which they converse and walk: then are they said to walk in the Spirit, by that work and office of the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour calls "its leading persons into all truth." He promises in those consolatory, valedictory discourses of his to his disciples, (in 14. 15. and 16. chapters of John's gospel) again and again the Spirit, and for this purpose, "to lead them into truth;" that, you know, is the part of directive light. But then it is one thing to direct only by telling, so and so you must do; and another thing by way of instinct, or by an inward prompting; by which too a person does not go in that case blindfold, but with an inclination, with spontaneity, and seeing his way all the way he goes. He walks in the light; and such a light as is directive and active to him at once.

(4.) It imports acting by a divine power all along through our whole course. The Spirit, where it is, is the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. 1. 7. They are said to be in the Spirit, who are under the power and dominion of it, as John says of himself, that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, in Rev. 1. 10. Under the influence of its almighty power, its captivating dominion. According as when persons are said to be in the flesh (an expression frequently used in Scripture) it notes their being under the power and dominion of a fleshly principle. So to walk in the Spirit, is to act on all along under the power and governing influence of the Spirit. I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, Zech. 10. 12. That one attribute, belonging to the divine nature, namely, the power of God, is more especially pointed at there.

There is a strict connexion between this and the last mentioned thing, that light and this power; that light being a vital, a living light. Though we may have distinct notions of them, yet they are in themselves connected and most inseparable. Come ye, let us walk in the light of the Lord, Isa, 2. 5. Even in the form of expression, though light is the thing which is directly spoken of, there is implied and involved therewith a certain active power, the being moved to go, and walk in that light, which, as such, was to guide them in their way. See what is referred to in ver. 3. He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. This signifies that their spirits were acted by a certain power which did incline

them unto this thing ; and not that they were merely enlightened. And whereas in this very chapter, the expression, “led by the Spirit,” is made use of in ver. 18. “If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law ;” as also in Rom. 8. 14. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God ; the word which is rendered *led* is *αγοραζαι*, and signifies acted or moved by a certain power. As many as are acted by the Spirit of God ; and they that are acted by the Spirit of God are not under the law, they are not cursed and condemned by it.

(5.) It imports acting from spiritual habitual principles that are fixed and settled in the soul ; and therefore includes in it the exercise of all the several graces of the Spirit. For you must know that when we say, walking in the Spirit implies walking in the divine light, and by the divine power ; it is not to be understood as if there were nothing else but a temporary, present ray of light, and efforts of power from the Spirit ; and so that there comes to be any thing habitually fixed in the soul itself. But though it is very true indeed that habitual light &c. in the soul from the Spirit must be maintained and continued by the Spirit, it is nevertheless to be looked upon as an habitual principle which is in the soul itself. And the case is here but as it is in nature ; for there can be no sort of life in all the creation, whereof God is not the Author ; nor any action done, but the power of doing it is received from him ; though there are many actions which he doth not make creatures do ; yet there is no action in which he does not enable, or not give them sufficient power. But yet, notwithstanding this, we know that the natures of creatures are distinct from one another ; and to say, that the divine power must do all, is to take away the distinction of natures wholly, and then a stone might reason as well as a man, and a tree might walk to and fro as well as a sensitive living creature : but God’s way of dealing with creatures in the natural creation, ordinarily, is to act them according to, and co-work with that peculiar nature which he hath put into this, and that, and the other creature. So it is here ; there is a divine nature, consisting of many gracious, holy, vital principles which God puts into the soul when he renews it ; and which are so many several parts of the new creature, and with these several principles, or with this divine nature he concurs or co-works ; though the exigency of the case is such, there being a corrupt nature joined therewith in the same subject, that here he must continually over-power unto every action that is done : and it is not enough to give, or maintain the principle, but he must work the very act itself, because of a reluctant principle, which would otherwise stran-

gle the act, and never let it be brought forth at all. But then we must not suppose that the power by which the work is done, is a thing only at this time given, and that there is no principle in the soul itself which it acts from; for there is a principle implanted and fixed in the soul, and though that requires to be acted, it is the way and method of the Spirit to act in and by that principle, or put that principle upon action. So that walking in the Spirit is walking in the exercise of the implanted principles of grace, and not without them, or not having any such work wrought or done in us; as if a person should be habitually inclined one way, and yet act another; believe, without a principle of faith; or love God, without a principle of love; or fear, without a principle of fear, by having these actions erected in him by the Spirit, without the habits from whence they are to proceed, and to which they are connatural. This is not to be supposed. And therefore whenever any walk in the actual exercise of grace, they walk in the Spirit. And it is very observable to this purpose that you have several fruits of the Spirit, or gracious principles enumerated immediately before the text, ver. 22, 23. You are there told what the fruits of the Spirit are; or what the principles are which this Spirit is the productive cause of, and then it is afterwards subjoined, "If we live in the Spirit," or have all these principles, "let us also walk in the Spirit," that is, in acting and exercising these principles. Hence therefore we read of walking by faith, (2 Cor. 5. 7.) and walking in the fear of the Lord, (Acts 9. 31.) and walking with God, (Mic. 6. 8.) and of walking in love. Eph. 5. 2. To walk in the exercise of these several graces of the Spirit, is walking in the Spirit.

(6.) It implies walking in the way of the Lord with freedom of choice, and from a spontaneous inclination; from both the notion of walking, which is voluntary, and the addition in the Spirit, which is the great Author of all liberty wheresoever it is; Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, 2 Cor. 3. 17. A person is not the less, but the more free by being impelled and moved by the Spirit; for it is the Spirit that makes him free and enlarges him: I will walk at liberty, says the Psalmist, for I keep thy precepts, psalm. 119. 46. And I will run the ways of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart, ver. 32.

(7.) It implies a continued reference to a rule. To walk in the Spirit is not to walk extravagantly, as those that know no measures or limits in their walking, and are as the wild ass used to the wilderness. Jer. 2. 24. It is opposed to walking after lust, or the inclinations of corrupt nature which you know is the only principle of all extravagancy. This I say, says the

apostle in the 16th verse of this chapter, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." The apostolical authority and majesty, which is imported in that solemn preface, is of very great remark and note. This I say, this I determine, this is one of the sacred *effata* and dictates which I pronounce to you in the name of the great God and Redeemer, whose office and authority I bear; "This I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." That Spirit will be a principle of holy order and regularity to you in all your walking: So the great promise of it implies in Ezek. 36. 27. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. You shall then be willing to walk in a prescribed way, the way that I line and rule out unto you all along.

(8.) It implies a complacent course of walking on in religion. Walking in the Spirit is walking cheerfully; it belongs to it, it is comprehended within the compass of it. Whenever any have the Spirit, this lies within their walk; it is part of that spiritual walk to be conversant, amidst consolations and joys and pleasures, and it is part of the signification of that expression, "Come let us walk in the light of the Lord." Light doth many times signify (besides knowledge, and holiness) joy, delight, pleasure. Walking is a motion for recreation, as you have heard; spiritual walking is a motion, if it be entirely in itself, amidst spiritual joys and comforts. The churches walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, in the before-mentioned 9. Acts 31. That sure was walking in the Spirit. It is suitable to the way in which christians are to walk, which is throughout, in every part of it, a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace, Prov. 3. 17. It is the Spirit that causes holy ones to walk in this way, and then sure it works in them a disposition suitable to the way. And if the way is pleasant, and the heart is suitably disposed thereunto, it cannot but be pleasant walking, so far as that disposition is in that pleasant way.

(9.) It is a continuing in the course and practice of religion. For walking is a continued motion: and therefore they that are said to walk in the Spirit, do not begin in the Spirit, and then think to be made perfect by the flesh (as the expression is in Gal. 3. 3.) but they continue in a course of spiritual motion.

(10.) Lastly, It imports a progress in spirituality. As was said before, there may be a continued motion that is not progressive; but walking in the Spirit imports a progressive motion in a course of spirituality. When persons make still nearer and nearer approaches unto their end, the term of their course; draw nearer and nearer to God, and as they draw

nearer to him, find a gradual influence of divine light and life and power, more discernable impressions of the divine image, grow more and more into a suitableness to him ; are more acquainted with him, are brought unto higher delectation, and to take more complacency in him : this is walking in the Spirit ; when a man's path, as it is said concerning the righteous man, is as the shining light, that shines more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day, Prov. 4. 18. As you know the nearer approach we make unto the light of a glorious lucid object, the more light we have, still all along as we go, our way grows more and more lightsome. And strength grows and increases too with the light, The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger, Job. 17. 9. There is an increase with the increase of God. They do not walk in the Spirit therefore who keep moving, but move in a circle, or in a round of empty sapless duties, keep up the formalities of religion, and no more ; but they walk in the Spirit who make a progress, who go forward, who draw nearer and nearer unto God, and become more suitable and like him, and fit for his eternal converse, and for all the present service whereto he calls them.

SERMON XIII.*

IT is the latter part of the verse that we are upon, from which, considered in that reference which it carries to the former, we have observed.—That it belongs to the state of them, who are made alive by the Spirit of God, to walk in the Spirit.—We have proposed in speaking to this, to shew you,—what walking in the Spirit imports, and—how it belongs unto the state of living christians thus to walk.—The former we have already spoken to, and now go on to the other, namely

II. To evince to you, that it belongs to the state of those, that live in the Spirit, thus to walk in it. Now we are to shew you, that it belongs to the state of such, as a *privilege*; and therein, the part of the Holy Ghost to cause and conduct all the holy motions of renewed souls: and also, that it belongs to their state, as a *duty*, and therein we are to shew you our part. The motion of this or that thing, if it can be said to be its own motion as this is said to be ours (for we must “walk in the Spirit”) signifies a part to be done by it; and we therefore have a part to do, in compliance with, and in subordination to the Spirit of God, in this thing. There cannot be walking in the Spirit, but there must be a concurrence of its part, and ours; its, according to its supremacy, and ours, according to our subordination. Under this second

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head therefore the demonstration will lie, how it belongs, or that it doth belong, to the state of renewed souls to walk in the Spirit; they may, and they ought. They may, so it speaks their privilege, and the readiness of the Spirit still to co-operate, according to what part is assigned it; they ought, so it speaks their duty; they ought so to walk, that is, so to demean and carry themselves, as that they may, according to the prescribed and appointed methods, make sure to themselves the help, and concurrent influence and co-operation of the Spirit through their course. Both these are plainly enough signified to us by the very words of the text itself; one, as implied, plainly enough implied, and the other more plainly expressed. And it will be necessary to speak unto them severally and distinctly.

1. Walking in the Spirit belongs unto the state of such as are spiritually alive, as a *privilege* proper thereunto. The injunction, "Walk in the Spirit," plainly supposes that the Spirit is communicable for this purpose, that walking in the Spirit is no impossible thing, that it is a thing which by a stated gracious vouchsafement appertains to the state of them to whom this charge is given. It is a known and unquestionable rule in such cases, that precepts and promises do imply one another: and such precept carries in it a virtual promise, any such promise carries in it a virtual precept. The precept supposes the promise, and the promise infers the precept, that is, an obligation to the thing in reference whereto such and such help is promised to be afforded. If it should be enjoined us to walk in the light of the sun, it is supposed that the sun doth ordinarily shine. There is a connection therefore manifestly implied here between the action that is enjoined us, and the supposed communication of the Spirit in order thereto; or its constant communicableness, or aptitude and readiness to communicate itself, according as walking in it doth require. For how harshly would it sound, to enjoin any one to make use of that wherewith he hath nothing at all to do; to use an incommunicable thing, a thing to which I have no pretence, to which I can lay no kind of claim! As if one should enjoin a child to do such or such a thing by the strength of a giant. It is implied that there are certain rules and methods, according whereunto, in a stated way, the Spirit is ready to communicate and give forth itself, in reference unto all those actions and motions, proper to the state of the renewed soul, which are comprehended, as you have heard, under the expression of walking.

The Spirit's part being that therefore which we have to consider and speak to in the *first* place, as pre-supposed;

there are two things that I shall do in reference to that. I shall shew you,—what communication of the Spirit is necessary unto our walking in it, and—the communicativeness of the Spirit, or its aptitude to communicate itself, unto this purpose, and according unto such necessity.

(1.) What communication of the Spirit is necessary unto this, that we may be said to walk in it. We have hinted to you already what communication is necessary, in telling you what walking in the Spirit implies. A communication both of light and power is necessary. Consider we both these. A communication of such light and such power, as are quite of another orb, and belong to another sphere than that of nature; a light that is more than natural, and a power that is more than natural: such light and power are necessary to our walking in the Spirit. We shall speak distinctly unto the one and the other of these.

[1.] Walking in the Spirit doth necessarily suppose a communication of spiritual light, or light from the Spirit, as the privilege of truly living christians, proper to their state, which the exigency of their case doth require and call for. This is of the very *primordia* (as I may speak) of the new creation, that great work of God upon the spirits of men, by which he doth new mould them both for obedience and blessedness. This light keeps within the sphere and verge of his own people, the people that he doth form for himself: O house of Jacob let us walk in the light of the Lord. Isa. 2. 5. It plainly means that directive light which is to guide the course of our walking, as you will see, if you look back unto the 3d verse of that chapter, “Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” That we may do so, it is necessary that he teacheth us his ways, and enlighten our ways, and, as it were, afford us a continual light through the whole course and tract of that way wherein we are to walk. This light is not merely an adventitious, uncertain thing, but a stated, settled thing. It is necessary that it be so in order to our walking in the Spirit. When God began this work of the new creation, the provision was, “Let there be light,” that was the care that was taken in the old creation, to which the apostle doth manifestly allude in 2 Cor. 4. 6. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He, that at first made light shine out of darkness, in raising up and forming this old world, when he comes to raise the new creation out of the ruins of the old, in the spirits of men,

doth the same thing, and followeth the same method. He makes light to shine into those dark and desolate souls, that before were lost in darkness and death, that they may know which way to turn themselves, and to choose their way, what is to be done, and what is not to be done. We are not to think that this light, this more than natural light, is a thing separate from a vital and motive power and influence, but most inwardly and necessarily conjunct and connected therewith: as the light of the sun in reference to the sensible world is a vigorous light, a light which hath an influence accompanying it. And think we with ourselves, what a miserable desolation must presently ensue, not only darkness, but death too, if God should put out the sun, and that great luminary of heaven should become all on a sudden totally extinct! What a universal languor would there be upon universal nature, even all on a sudden! Such is the light unto the new world, the new creation of which I am speaking. That spiritual light, as was formerly intimated, is vital light, "light of life." Life is said to be light in that heretofore mentioned, John 1. 4. And when, in Eph. 5. 14. the words are directed unto souls that are asleep and buried, as it were, in death, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," it is superadded what they were to expect from Christ; and one would think it should rather have been said, Christ shall give thee life; but it is said, "Christ shall give thee light," implying that to be a vital light, a light that carries life in it; and which, when he comes efficaciously and powerfully to awaken souls, and by his word make them arise, he must then infuse light and life together in one. Light is spoken of as the very composition of the new creature, as if it were a being all of light, "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," and this in reference to their walking as children of the light. Eph. 5. 8. They are made up of light, being born spirit of Spirit, as we had occasion formerly to note. The great and glorious God himself is called the God of light, they are called the children of light. That is their parentage. Light descended of light, begotten of light. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." All converse with him is walking in the light as he is in the light, 1 John 1. 7.—It is true, that light signifies holiness, it necessarily connotes it; but then this only, as was heretofore intimated, doth import and signify, that that light, which goes into the composition of the new creature, is efficacious, refining, transforming light, such as makes the soul some way throughout suitable unto the motions of truth, which are now placed in the speculative understanding. Whereas the case is much otherwise with unchanged, unrenewed souls.

There is a discordancy, a disagreement between their habitual frame and temper, and the notions of truth which are in their minds. But when the notions of truth, and the frame and disposition of the heart come to be similar unto one another, then is the soul said to be, as it were, a being of light, it is all light. "Ye were darkness," so men are in their natural and degenerate state, all darkness, the very light that is in them is darkness, but when this change comes to be made, then are they "light in the Lord." Now that which is so natural, and is even in the very constitution of the new creature, must needs be a continual thing; and so must be continually maintained, and is maintained by a continual influence, or irradiation of light from the blessed Spirit upon the soul that it hath begot.

I might be here yet more particular, as it is not unnecessary to be, and shew you both in reference to what objects, and in reference to what acts, such light is needful for our walking in the Spirit.

First. In reference to what objects such light is necessary. What things are there to be discovered and made known to them that are capable of walking in the Spirit, in reference whereto such a light as this is necessary? Many objects we might speak of, if we would particularize, but we shall gather up things (because we intend to speak very briefly) under as general heads as we can.

It is necessary, first, that we have light in reference to the *end* towards which we are to act or move in this course. Spiritual walking, as you have heard, connotes an end; it is necessary that there be a spiritual light in reference to that end, unto which the course of this spiritual walking is, and ought to be directed. That end, you know, is no other than the blessed God himself, and him considered, as in Christ; for he is not otherwise accessible; and we are never to think a thought of moving or tending towards him, otherwise than in Christ, and through him. This light is necessary to reveal both the Father and the Son to us. "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." We need to have him shewn. The disciples acknowledged so much in John 14. 8. It is only in this light that we can see light. Ps. 36. 9. How strangely confused and blundering notions of God have they, who are destitute of this supervening additional light! Whatsoever objects they have, they are dim and without efficacy, and God is known as if he were not known. He hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him. 1 John 5. 20. And we are in him: the knowledge of God in Christ is that which unites, or draws the soul into union; and that is the understanding given; that is the additional, supervening

light. Whosoever sinneth, saith that same apostle, hath not seen God. 1 John 3. 6. ὁ κακοποιῶν, he that is *an evil doer*; (we cannot render it more strictly according to the letter than so) he hath not seen God; that is, he that is in an unregenerate state, he that yet lives a life of sin, he hath not seen God; no beam of true divine light hath ever yet shined in that wretched soul. As our Saviour tells the Jews in John 5. 37. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. Ye have not seen, ye have never found a right notion of God to any purpose. All that while persons are in a very ill condition for walking towards him, for moving and tending God-ward. A soul cannot move blindfold towards its end, but in the light, and with open eyes. And if men are alienated from the life of God, it is through the blindness of their hearts. Ephes. 4. 18. Persons therefore, who are brought to have a participation in the divine life, have a participation of the divine light at the same time to guide all the course of their motions and operations God-ward, and that continually supplied by his "Spirit of revelation." How strangely at a loss are persons to conceive of the excellencies and beauties of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom, and through whom we are to tend to God, till this light shine in upon them! The apostle prays in behalf of the Ephesians, that "God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," that is, our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he had spoken before, Ephes. 1. 17. As if he should have said, "You can never come to know him, to own and acknowledge him, (the word there used doth signify acknowledgment) to know him to purpose, unless the Spirit of wisdom and revelation be given you for that end." Others look upon him as one without form, without comeliness even when they see him, as the expression is to that purpose in Isa. 53. 2. Even while men see him, they see no beautiful object; no inviting, no captivating excellencies are beheld in him, nothing for which he is reckoned desirable from a practical judgment. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation therefore is necessary to this. And when we consider God our end, towards whom through Christ we are now to be moving, the principal consideration of him as our end, is in that state wherein we are finally to acquiesce and rest in him, that is, the future state of glory and blessedness. And how altogether unapprehensive of the attractive power of that end are those souls that are yet destitute of this life! Therefore, in that mentioned Ephes. 1. 18. the apostle prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to be given to the Ephesians, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know the hope of their calling, and what is

the riches of the glory of the inheritance that God hath in his saints, or, among his saints, as it may be read; the glories of that state wherein the saints in common have a share. Our course is to be directed heaven-ward, walking in the Spirit; we are to walk towards heaven, that ought to be the tendency of our course all along: but how are they capable of walking heaven-ward, who are destitute of the inviting, alluring representations of it? And how impossible is it, that they should otherwise be had, than by this divine light? Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it enters not into the heart of man to conceive of, God has prepared for them that love him; and, as it follows, he hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, that Spirit which teaches the deep things of God. 1 Cor. 2. 9. 10. And if you carry on the discourse to the 12th verse, there you find, We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. We come by this Spirit to have some right knowledge of the things that are freely given, which without this light we could never have known.

This light is necessary, secondly, to shew us our *way* from step to step. The spirituality of that duty which is required of us we can never understand aright without this Spirit. To know what it is to meet with God, what it is to obey out of love, what it is to be in a continual, profound subjection of Spirit unto the authority and law of an invisible God, we shall never understand these things, we shall never know them without this light. A regenerate man has the law of God, and an unregenerate man may have it too; but we find that in reference to that clearer light which the regenerate person is capable of, and is possessed of more or less, he hath need to have his eyes open to see what there is in that law: Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119. 18. There are wonders inclosed in the law of God, which an unregenerate man doth not dream of, which escape his ken, or come not within his notice. A regenerate person, one who is made spiritually alive, is brought in this respect, as into a new world; all things look with another face and aspect to him. He is said to be translated out of darkness into marvellous light, *φως θαυμαστον* *amazing light*, 1. Pet. 2. 9. When he once comes into that light, "Where am I!" saith he. "What a glorious light am I got into!" Look to the way in which he is to walk, and there is a lustre and glory upon it, which was never apprehended before; as, according to another attribute of the same way, it is said to be pleasant. The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov. 3. 17. A carnal mind never apprehends any

pleasure in these ways, and so apprehends no glory, no amiableness in them.

This light is necessary, thirdly, in reference to the proper *motives* of this walking. There are such things. Indeed they lie very much in the objects themselves, but we may frame, concerning some, a diverse consideration of motives; and besides those that are in the objects; that is, respect the spiritual and divine objects, they are desirable for themselves, and accordingly, the object is a motive; but there are accessory and supervening motives; as it is a very great motive to betake ourselves unto this region of spirituality, of spiritual light, and life and motion, to cast an eye upon this our world, and behold the vanity, the nothingness of it, and all things that do belong unto this *compages* or frame. There needs this spiritual, divine light to behold that. A carnal man can never make a right judgment, to the purpose, of the vanity of the creature, of the emptiness and nothingness of all things under the sun. But to one that lives in the divine light, that walks and is conversant there, what a fleeting, despicable shadow is all this world, this frame of sensible things, that is vanishing under his eye! He sees how the fashion of it is passing away; and by how much the more he is weaned hereby, and disengaged from it, so much the more is he at liberty for this spiritual walk which we speak of. By how much the more he gets out of the entangling snares of death that are below, so much the more is his way above, as the way of the wise is; so much the more is he conversant in that path, that unknown way, which the "vulture's eye hath not seen, and which the lion's foot hath not trod;" that way of wisdom, or holiness, or life, so much spoken of in Job 28.

This light is necessary, fourthly, in order to the knowledge of *ourselves*. We can never walk in the Spirit if we have not some competent discerning of ourselves; and we can never know the weaknesses, the wants, the wiliness and deceit of our own spirits without the divine light. To be conversant therein is necessary to all such purposes, and in reference to our making a discovery of whatsoever is needful to be discovered concerning the state, and posture, and temper, and ordinary ways and methods of our souls.

Secondly, The acts in reference whereto such light is necessary are these:

It is necessary, first, in reference to the act of *apprehension*. We cannot so much as apprehend clearly and with distinction the things which are needful for us to apprehend, without this light of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation given for these purposes.

In reference unto the acts of *consideration* it is necessary, secondly, that we have this light to converse and walk in. Otherwise we can have no steady discerning of any thing. For consideration is nothing else but knowledge continued, or the often repeated acts of apprehension, varied this way and that, according to the various representations of the object about which I am now employing my mind. In reference to such an act of vision as this, that is, steady, intent vision, there needs steady light. I cannot have a steady view of a thing by a flashy and evanid light, Walking therefore in the Spirit doth require a continued light of the Spirit to be afforded me, because I have constant need to go with my eyes in my head all along, and to consider and ponder my way from step to step, from point to point, but without such a steady light, as may, as it were, determine my eye to such and such objects needful to be considered : alas ! how incapable is it of looking with a steady intuition, that is, of thinking composedly of any thing which it most concerns me to think of. Can we command our own thoughts ? Consult we our experience ; we can no more do it, than “gather up the winds in our fists.” But the Spirit in this way of operation, holds them steady by a commanding light, which keeps them, as it were under its own government, “Look hither,” and so doth determine and fix the eye to that which I am called now to consider. Whence you have that experience pronounced and spoken out, We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, 2 Cor. 4. 18. The word which is here rendered *look* signifies *to take aim at*, σκοπεῖν τὴν ἡμῶν. That is a very steady intuition which a man hath of the mark which he is aiming at, or the end which he designs ; he must always have it in his eye. And, by this looking, saith the apostle, “we find that notwithstanding, all the decays of the outward man the inward is renewed day by day,” life and vigour and spirit continually entering in at our eyes from that glorious aim which we have before us. This will need a very steady determination of mind unto such objects by a commanding light and glory that they carry with them, so as that the soul feels not a disposition in itself to direct or look off.

This light is necessary, thirdly, in order to the act of *dijudication*, that is, distinguishing or discerning between things and things, what is of great value and account, and to be chosen, and what is worthless, and to be neglected ; what is to be done, and what is not to be done. There is a continual need through the whole course of our spiritual walk for the using of such a discrete judgment between things and things, and in reference

hereto, there needs a continual emanation of the Holy Ghost : for otherwise, we put good for evil, and evil for good ; light for darkness, and darkness for light ; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. That sense which should be exercised to distinguish between good and evil, is from the blessed Spirit, residing in our eye, putting continually fresh vigour in it, that we may be able by quickness of sight to discern or see, here is somewhat to be closed with, here is somewhat to be refused ; this will be good, that will be noxious. The apostle doth on this account pray (and that is a plain intimation to us, that it is the office and work of the Spirit of God to do the thing that he there speaks of ; he prays) on the behalf of the Philippians, in chap. 1. 9, 10. that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. So we read it ; but the word rendered *judgment* is capable of being rendered *sense* (πᾶσι αἰσθήσει, *in all sense*) “ I pray that you may have your spiritual senses in exercise ; that you may have a judicious distinguishing sense” For what ? Why, “ that ye may approve things that are excellent ;” so it follows, or as the words there may be read, to distinguish the things that differ. You are otherwise likely to be imposed upon, if the Spirit take not that particular care of you, by the deceitful appearances of things.

In order, fourthly, to the act of *determination*, or coming to a determinative judgment, as we do upon comparing things, and noting the difference between one and another. We need the Spirit’s help here, to shine with that vigorous and powerful light into the mind, as to bring our judgments to a right determination, for the rule and government of our practice, which are apt to be long hovering and in suspense, if they do not hastily determine amiss. You have the apostle expressing his own determining judgment, in a particular, but very important case in Rom. 8. 18. “ I reckon,” saith he ; the word which he makes use of, is a word from whence we borrow the name of *logic*, λογίζομαι, I do compute, or I am, by reason, come at last unto this definitive and positive judgment, “ that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” That there should be such a positive, determinative judgment as that which should have the power to be influential upon his course, and directive of it, do you think he was not beholden to the illumination of the Holy Ghost ? He doth not speak like a doubtful, uncertain man, or one that did not know what to choose, or how to steer his course. “ For my part, saith he, I thus judge ; I am at a point, having viewed the case round, inspected it narrowly and thoroughly, and considered all about it that is to be considered, and I say, that

these two things, the sufferings of time, and the glories of eternity are not to be named in the same day, there is no compare between them." In order to such a determination of the mind as this, it is plain this light must necessarily come in; and there can be nothing of greater moment to the whole course of our walking in the Spirit than such a determinative judgment.

You see therefore that a communication of *light* from the Spirit is necessary to our walking in the Spirit. A communication of power is necessary to the same purpose too; but of that in the next discourse.

SERMON XIV.*

I Am now to shew you,

[2.] That a communication of spiritual *power* is also necessary that we may be capable of walking in the Spirit. It is said that they who shall walk in such a course as this is "without weariness," must in order thereto "renew their strength," and this strength is to be from a divine communication, because it is that which we are to wait upon the Lord for, Isa. xl. 31. We hear of a strength in the inner man given and sought for, which implies it capable of being given, for this purpose. The Psalmist speaks his experience of its being given in psalm 138. 3. In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. And the apostle prays that it might be given unto the Ephesians, (chap. 3. 16.) that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, &c. You will never be able to act that faith wherewith to keep up any converse with Christ, or by which he can have any commodious reception in your souls, so as to dwell there, if you are not strengthened according to the riches of his glory with might by his Spirit in the inner man, in order thereunto.

That we may speak a little more distinctly to this, it will

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be requisite to shew you,—what kind of influence, or communication of power will *not* be sufficient in this case: and then,—what is, over and beside that, necessary, as what *will* suffice for this purpose.

First, What will *not* suffice. It is requisite that you have a right, and as clear an account as is possible of this.

For first, It will not be sufficient to have only that *common power* afforded to us, which doth suffice for common, natural action: whether by that power we understand the faculties belonging to the reasonable nature, or whether you do also comprehend therewith the promptitude and aptitude of those faculties for common actions. This will not suffice for spiritual actions, so that we may be said to walk in the Spirit. Which may easily be made to appear from such considerations as these. Namely,

If only such a communication of power were sufficient, then no more influence is afforded unto *regenerate* persons than to the *rest* of men. For they have a power which doth enable them to the common actions which belongs to them as men, as reasonable creatures; which doth enable them, not which doth constrain them; or make them do many actions which yet they do. And again,

Then there were as much power and influence afforded and given forth, in order to *sinful* and forbidden actions, as in order to *good* and holy, and commanded ones, which it were very unreasonable and horrid to think, as we shall have occasion to shew you by and by. In reference to the latter, such an influence goes forth, as by which God doth procure that they shall be done, or makes them to be; but sure we will not dare to say concerning forbidden actions, that he makes them to be done, though he gives such a power as by which they may, and can be done; otherwise indeed it were impossible they should be done, namely, if power were not derived from him. Further,

Otherwise it might *be possible* that no *good action* should ever be done; and consequently that no person should be saved, or finally happy. Of so great concernment it is carefully to distinguish between that common power, by which such and such actions *may* be done, and that power by which, such and such actions *must*, and *shall* be done, or shall be procured to be done. And again,

Otherwise it were not only possible that no spiritual and holy actions might be done, but *impossible* that any should. For it is not only impossible that any action should be done without power, but it is impossible also that any action should be done without a power proportionable to the kind and nature of

that action. And since merely natural power is altogether unproportionable unto the kind of holy and spiritual actions, it would be equally absurd to say that such actions could be done by so improper a power, as to say, that an action can be done by no power at all. If you assign an unproportionable power to any action, it is a perfect equivalence to no power ; for it is no power as to this purpose. As a power to walk is no power proportionable unto the offices and functions of a reasonable soul, so that common power by which such and such natural actions may be done, is no way proportionable unto spiritual actions, which it is undertaken shall be done, which must be done, in order to their blessedness in the other world, and their glorifying God in this, who are designed at length, even of the Spirit, to receive life everlasting, Gal. 6. 8.

And in the last place, If common natural power were all that is requisite in this case, then no *exercise of grace*, or no actual grace could be said to be *the gift of God*, and consequently, it must be denied to be grace : for what is grace but a divine gift ? Common natural power in reference unto these actions whereunto it is adequate, never infers that those actions are to be referred to God as given by him. And it may very easily be made to appear to you, that the supposition of a power only for spiritual actions, (that is, the natural faculty) though you suppose never so much promptitude for common action, which is to be made use of even in these, could not leave us ground whereupon to call such and such exercises of grace divine gifts. For it would be very absurd to give the name of the thing done, or to be done, to the power that must be used in the doing of it. If we might suppose that at all tolerable, then we must suppose that, because all men have natural faculties which must be made use of in believing, and have a promptitude for many other actions, which are some way congenerous, or of like kind, all men are believers. If it can be enough to say that God is the giver of faith, because he gives the natural faculties which are to be made use of in believing, then we must say that he hath given faith to all the world, and consequently since all believers shall be saved, we must say too, that all the world shall be saved. Yea, if there were not an aversion unto this same work of faith, for instance, which is to be otherwise overcome, it were yet altogether improper so to speak, namely, that the power of believing is believing, that is, the natural power to be used for a purpose, which the spiritual power doth suppose. For you might every whit as well say, that the power of building a house, is a house ; and the power, which is to be used in fighting, is a battle ; the absurdity of which

phrases, or forms of speech is obvious to every one at the first view.

And if this were sufficient to say, that such and such acts or exercises are the gifts of God, because that natural power, which is presupposed in order thereto, and must be used therein, is given by him, then we might as well call the fruits of the flesh the gifts of God, as the fruits of the Spirit. For (as hath been intimated before) that power by which any sinful or fleshly act can be done, must be supposed to have had a divine original, or else no such act could have been done, God being the fountain of all power whatsoever. And all acts *ad extra*, all operations that are any where put forth towards the creature are common to the persons of the Trinity, and are indeed expressly attributed to the Spirit of God. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, (Job 26. 13.) and reneweth the face of the earth, Psalm. 104. 30. Upon this supposition therefore the very distinction would be taken away between the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit, which we see the text hath an express reference to; and those who do the most vile of those fleshly acts might all that while be said to walk in the Spirit as those who do the best actions imaginable. That natural power therefore which is sufficient for actions in common is not sufficient there.

Nor secondly, is the *addition of gracious habits* sufficient to our walking in the Spirit, or our doing spiritual actions. There must be an influence beyond that by which such habits are given and infused. For,

Those habits themselves could not subsist without a *continual influence*: especially, it being considered, they that are in the souls of sinful, corrupt, degenerate men even at the best. They are in soils which are not natural to them. They are foreign plants, and do so much the more need a continual preservative influence. As heat which is introduced into water, because it is not natural unto that water, therefore needs to be continually cherished by a fire maintained and kept under it; and if the influence of the external agent, the fire without, were not continued to maintain the heat within, it would soon vanish, and the coldness, which is natural to the water, would recover itself. Which argues that that quality which is foreign, and from without, needs a continual influence from without to maintain it. But that is not all, for

Beside the influence which is necessary to maintain such habits, there is an influence necessary *to act them* in a renewed soul; otherwise they would not be acted. For these habits are in conjunction with contrary habits which would impede the other from going forth into act: which we do not need to

reason with you much about, because we find the matter so expressly asserted in Scripture, even this very Gal. 5. 17. Ye cannot do the things that ye would. And why? because the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and these two, saith the apostle, are contrary the one to the other. And here it seems more reasonable to understand by Spirit, the new nature, the new creature, which you have heard is called Spirit, in John 3. 6. And for that very reason is the injunction given in the 16 verse of this chapter, to walk in the Spirit. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, &c." He speaks to those whom he supposes to be furnished with the habits of grace, and yet they could not act for all that, unless they did walk in the Spirit; and therefore walking in the Spirit must import more on the Spirit's part, than only its furnishing the soul, with gracious habits added to natural powers. And for my part, I dare not venture to say, what many do, that the apostle speaks of himself, in Rom. 7. as in a state wherein he was destitute of grace, when he so expressly says, that how to perform that which is good he did not find. Sure he was not without the habits of grace when he said this, yet though he had the habits of grace, there were times in which he could not find to do the things that were good. Such habits therefore do need farther influence than what doth infuse and maintain them, by which they may be capable of being brought forth into act. And therefore

Secondly, We shall next lay down what *is necessary* and will be sufficient in this case that spiritual actions may be done, and so that we may be truly said to walk in the Spirit. And such an influence is necessary, and would be sufficient for this purpose as will be so efficacious as to direct and determine and over-rule the heart into the doing of this and that particular action, so that it may not only be said, as concerning common actions, such an action may be done by such a natural power put forth, but this action shall be done. In short, such an influence, as by which a person is not only enabled to do such an action, but is made to do it; or by which the action is procured to be done: so that the very production of the action is referable unto the divine influence in this case, as that whereunto it doth actually enable and determine the doer. And that so much is necessary unto every spiritual and holy action we shall prove to you from several scripture-considerations.

We remark first, holy souls are wont to *disclaim* any sufficient ability to do a good action. They say that it is not in them: that if a good action be done, it is not they that have done it by any power that was either natural to them, or super-added diverse and distinct from that, but by the issue and

communication of a power from God when it was done. See how they speak unto this purpose. Look into 2. Cor. 3. 5. Thinking a good thought is as little a good action as any one you can suppose or think of, but for that, saith he, "we are not sufficient of ourselves." That great apostle had not yet got a sufficiency into his own hand, by all his light and knowledge, and by all his habitual grace, for so much as the thinking a good thought; Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. You find his state again in that before-mentioned Rom. vii. 5. 21. When I would do good, evil is present with me; so ver. 18. how to perform that which is good I find not. There was a natural power, and there were habits of grace, but yet there was wanting that present, actual, over-powering determination to the doing of this good action which we have told you is farther necessary.

It is evident secondly, the blessed God himself, who knows us better than we do ourselves, doth expressly deny us to have that ability, an ability to act otherwise than as it is supplied and given still from time to time. Without me ye can do nothing, saith our Lord to his disciples in John 15. 5. He means it apparently of spiritual actions; for the expression is expository of that of bearing fruit, by which they should appear to be his disciples, and such fruits as for which sap and influence was to be derived from him the vine. As though he had said, "There cannot be a good action done without me."

And thirdly, the people of God, as they disclaim it in reference to themselves, so they *ascribe* it to God. When they have done any good action, they own it to have been from him; as David in his own and the people of Israel's behalf in 1. Chron. 29. What a solemn and joyful thanksgiving to God is there upon this account, that he enabled them to offer willingly! That willingness of obligation is acknowledged unto God. Yea, they ascribe it to God that even such an action may be done; By thee will we make mention of thy name, (Isa. 26. 13.) implying that they could not so much as make serious mention of God, without God.

And fourthly, as they ascribe it to God, so God *claims* it to himself. He had denied it concerning them, and they deny it of themselves; they ascribe it to God, and God assumes it to himself. He claims it as a thing appropriate and belonging to him to be the author of any good action that is done by any of his. How plain is that passage in Phil. 2. 13. It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. Not the inclination only is from him, as it is the purpose of the habit to incline to this or that thing, but even the

action itself; he works it. And so the apostle speaks concerning christians in common in Phil. 1. 29. that it is given to them to believe; not only the principle, but the act of faith is said to be the gift of God; for to believe is the act of faith. It is given not only to believe but to suffer, that is, the act of faith and the act of patience, the exercise of both the one and the other are given things. And it is very remarkable to this purpose that God doth therefore promise that he would be the Author unto his people of their good works which they shall do by his Spirit. You see it is the tenour of his covenant in Ezek. 36. 27. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. Sure this is a peculiar thing and different from what can be said of many other sorts of action, but concerning this sort of action he causes the very doing of the thing. Nothing can be more plain.

We may farther argue it, fifthly, from the *reference* which holy and good actions have unto that same rank and order of things unto which spiritual habits and principles do belong. Take you such a sphere of good things, include good habits within that compass, and you must include good actions within it too; and then, if one be from God, the other must be from him, for every such good and perfect gift is from above, James 1. 17. Now will I say, if an act of grace, or a holy spiritual action be a good action, then it is from God, as that which he causes, or which he may be said to give; it is a gift of his grace: and we cannot say that the habit is a spiritual good thing, and that the act is not, when as the habit is in order to the act, and were otherwise useless. And if habitual grace be a good thing, we may upon that account say, that actual grace, or the exercise of grace, is better, because it is that to which the other is subordinate, and to which it serves, and therefore may with the greatest certainty and clearness be concluded to be a divine gift.

We may farther argue, sixthly, from the *analogy* which there is between the *direct* and the *reflex* actions of a christian. For consider the reflex actions, by which he looks in upon himself, and takes notice of such and such things wrought and done in him, and concludes his relation to God, as a child; how are these reflex acts wrought? By the Spirit of God, "bearing witness with our spirits;" and you must suppose it to be the superior in this work, as it belongs to it to be. It must then be proportionably so in reference to the direct acts of a christian too. That is, If I cannot know without the Spirit's testimony witnessing with my spirit, that I am a child of God; then I cannot do the direct actions which are proper to

a child, without that Spirit overruling and acting my spirit in that case. I cannot believe, I cannot love &c.

We may yet again argue, seventhly, from the many *apostolical prayers*, which we find scattered up and down in the epistles, by which actual grace, or grace in exercise is implored for the christians unto whom they were written. Certainly such prayers were not impertinent or improper. Do but look into some of those passages briefly. In 2 Thes. 3. 5. the apostle prays that God would direct their hearts into the love of himself, and into the patient waiting for Christ. These were acts of grace, loving himself, and expecting the appearance of his Son; why, the Lord, saith he, direct your hearts thereinto, or determine them unto this very thing. It would be very strange to suppose that a man's heart should need such direction or determination unto another sort of actions; that is, that I should as much need that God should determine it to hate him, unto which my heart is so propense and inclined of itself: but as to such spiritual actions as these, you see the exigency of the case is such, as to make such a prayer as this very proper, "Lord, direct their hearts into the love of thee, direct their hearts into the expectation of thy Son." It is plain then that the very acts were referred unto the divine productive power, or determinative influence, not the bare inclination. And the apostle prays also for the Colossians, in Col. 1. 9, 10. that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; that expression walk (by which you have heard in the opening of that term in the text, acting, or exercising of grace is to be understood) he explains, as we did, by working; "being fruitful in every good work—strengthened with all might," &c. The like also you find in the epistle to the Hebrews chap. 13. ver. 20, 22. The apostle there supplicates the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, that he would make them perfect in every good work to do his will. Here is still the action, the exercise of grace, in reference unto which it is matter of prayer to God, that God would make them do so and so, or efficaciously determine their spirits unto such actions.

We may argue from hence, lastly, that the Scripture makes certain discernable characters to be as it were impressed on such and such actions, namely, those that are spiritual and holy, as by which it might be known that God was the Author of them. To give you an instance in that one expression in John 3. 20, 21. The form of expression may lie thus, in reference to what had been before spoken concerning the light, that light in which every one must be understood to walk, that

walks holily, or in the Spirit, as you have before heard : he who so walks, in such light, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. A true light will make it manifest that such and such works are wrought in God. It is therefore necessarily supposed that there are some discriminative characters between works and works, and that those which God makes men do are distinguishable by the divine light, from those which he never doth so entitle himself to ; that holy and spiritual actions, in short, may be said to have been wrought in God.

And it highly concerns us to consider, whether indeed the course and tenour of our actions is capable of having this said concerning it. Looking over the course of my conversation, can I say, "My works have been wrought in God ; bring them to the light, and it will appear that they are wrought in God ?" Even those works wherein we have immediately to do with him, the works and duties of religion themselves ; O! can we say, that they are works wrought in God ? "I have been so carried out in prayer, as that I could find this prayer was wrought in God ; and so carried out in meditation, and conferring with my own heart, in self-thoughts, that bring these into the light, and I can discern that they were wrought in God ; the impress of the divine hand and power is visible upon them ?" Alas ! how plainly convictive would the light which we have among us be concerning most of our works, that they are not wrought in God, that they are done at a very great distance from God, and that we have had little commerce with God in them ! That little walking in the Spirit that appears even among those who profess religion at this day, is a great testimony against us, that God hath little to do by his Spirit with the government of our lives ; that is, we do not put ourselves under it, and resign ourselves to it. (As when we come to speak of our own part in this matter we shall have occasion to shew ; though there we are acted too.) The vanity and the deadness of our spirits, the formality, the licentiousness and the extravagancies of our spirits, alas ! they too plainly shew that we do not walk in the Spirit, and that our works are not wrought in God. There is not a religion living amongst us, which is God-wrought, whereunto we can entitle him as the Author of it.

It was therefore necessary to insist, as we have done, in letting you understand what dependance we must have upon an immediate influence, as to every good work, which leaves not our spirits undetermined or at loose, but, they being averse to every thing of that kind, overpowers them therein. It was necessary, I say, that the truth in this matter should be

held forth to us, because I am very much persuaded, that this is the great worm at the root of religion this day. Faith in the eternal Spirit is not acted to draw forth that life and influence which would make our religion a living, active thing, and hold it forth lovely and beautiful in the eyes of the world. Therefore it is that we are such languishing creatures as to the business of religion, and as to all spiritual actions, because it is not enough understood that all these works must be wrought in us and for us. For if that were understood, we should not be so self-confident as we are, when we go to duties, and concerning the government of our conversations, to cover ourselves with a covering that is not of God's Spirit, and make up to ourselves a texture of religion which it never wrought for us, never put on us : nor should we be so inobservant of the motions and breathings of that Spirit, make so little of them, call for them so seldom, and complain so little when there is a cessation, a retraction of that influence from us in any measure. Certainly our judgments have need to be rectified about this matter, and actual thoughts to be revived in our hearts, that we cannot move a step in our spiritual way and walk without the help of this Spirit ; that it must do all in us and for us, Whilst this is not understood and considered, we wander, and live apart from God, and Christ, and his Spirit, as if we could choose our own way, and do all, that is needful for us to do, of ourselves ; and so we betray ourselves into ruin and death, when we should be soaring aloft in that way which is the way of the wise. For we are not to think (as we shall have occasion to shew) that because this Spirit governeth our way by a strong, that therefore it doth it by a violent hand. No ! but in a certain method which it hath prescribed and wherein it must act with our concurrence : otherwise we could not be said to walk in the Spirit, but should be merely passive, stupid blocks, and no more. We should no more walk than a stone walks, when it is moved to roll by a violent hand.

X

SERMON XV.*

WE are shewing how it belongs to the state of regenerate persons to walk in the Spirit, and have hitherto considered it as a privilege agreeable to their state. They *may* do so. We have proposed to shew the extent of this privilege, or what communications of the Spirit must be understood to lie within the compass of it; and the attainableness of it, or how ready the Spirit is to give forth these communications according as the case shall require. As to the former of these, we have shewn that the privilege consists in these two things, namely, A communication of spiritual light, and a communication of spiritual power. Both these have been spoken to, and we may refer unto either, or unto both of them, not only such a communication as is necessary for the operations of grace, but even the comforting and consolatory communications also, which are sometimes spoken of under the name of light, "light in the Lord;" and sometimes under the name of strength and power, as when the joy of the Lord, is said to be "the strength of his people."

But we pass over unto the next head, namely,

(2.) To shew the attainableness of the Spirit; or how apt the blessed Spirit of God is to communicate and give forth such influence, as the case doth require, that they who live in the Spirit, may be capable of walking in the Spirit. And here it

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is necessary,—to clear to you the sense, and then,—to evince the truth, of what we do now assert, namely, that unto all those to whom the Spirit hath been the Author of a new, divine life, it is ready to communicate and give forth all needful influence, in order to their suitable walking. In reference to the former of these we shall give you some explicatory propositions, and in reference to the latter some demonstrative considerations.

[1.] For the clearing of the sense of what is asserted, take these few propositions,

First, When we say that the Spirit is ready to communicate itself for such purposes, or for that general purpose which has been expressed, of our walking in the Spirit, the meaning is, that it is ready to do so in a stated and constant course, and not that it doth so only sometimes, very rarely, and now and then. For it were not to be imagined that this should lie as a stated, constant precept upon all christians, “walk in the Spirit,” if the supposed ground thereof were intercepted, and to be but rarely found actually in being. Walking is a continued thing, (as we formerly intimated) and imports the constant and settled course of a christian’s life or practice; and therefore there were no sufficient ground upon which such an obligation as this could be inferred upon the christian, if the influence of the Spirit in order thereto were exhibited but very rarely.

Secondly, We must understand that therefore there are certain rules according whereto the blessed Spirit (though as we find it is called in Scripture, a free Spirit) is come under obligation that it will be present, by a vital, active influence, as the great Author and Director of that course of holy motion unto which renewed ones are more immediately engaged. We must suppose that there is a connexion between their observance of such and such rules, and the Spirit’s communicating and giving forth its influence according to those rules. This for explication I now lay down only in the general; what those rules are we shall have occasion distinctly to tell you, when we come to the second general head, namely, to treat of our part in this matter, or how walking in the Spirit belongs to the state of souls spiritually alive as a duty.

Thirdly, When we speak of the Spirit’s being so obliged, you must understand it in reference to a regenerate subject. For within these bounds our text doth confine us: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Living in the Spirit is supposed. We cannot suppose that it should have annexed and tied its communications unto the actions, or the endeavour of any other sort of persons that lie without this

compass. To such as are got into the sphere of life, are within this verge, and have actual union with the Mediator, who is the spring and treasury of all spiritual life, and in whom all the promises, all the ties and obligations that the blessed God hath brought himself under any way, are yea, and amen; to such, I say, we must understand that this influence is in this stated way to be communicated, and may be expected. It is very true that others have no cause to despair, but these have cause and ground to believe. They have no cause to despair, because this Spirit is, as hath been said, a free Spirit, and, as "the wind bloweth where it listeth," none can tell but it may, one time or another, cast a favourable breath even on them. But these have reason to be confident, for the communications, of which we speak, are part of his portion, and a privilege belonging unto their state. We only add in the

Fourth place, that whereas we told you, that the communications of the Holy Ghost, due unto this purpose, do comprehend both the influences of grace and of comfort, we must understand this obligation to be more in reference to the former, than to the latter, to what concerns the being of gracious operations than the well-being. It is true, there is somewhat of comfort involved in the very nature of a gracious act, according as it is wont to be said concerning natural acts, that they all are pleasant, or carry a kind of pleasantness with them; so those acts which are connatural to the new-creature, have a pleasure in them, which we cannot separate even from those acts of that kind which seem to import most of vigour and severity; as the very acts of repentance and self-denial, if they be in their own kind, vital acts, proceeding from the Spirit of grace, and from the new nature put into the soul. One might appeal to the experience of christians, whether they do not find pleasure in melting before the Lord, pleasure in abandoning and quitting all that is dear to them, when they can fully do it, for his sake, and upon his account. Such consolation therefore as is intrinsical to any gracious act must be distinguished from that consolation which follows afterward upon reflection, or our taking a review of such and such gracious characters, discriminative tokens, discernable upon ourselves, and by which we can judge of our case. For the other pleasure is without intervening judgment, the acts are pleasant in themselves, even before we come to reflect, or take notice, or consider any thing concerning our states, whereof they are, or any thing else discernable in ourselves may be understood to be, characteristical. In reference to the consequential consolations we must understand the Spirit to have reserved to itself a liberty; it is more arbitrary in communications of that kind, and

doth upon mere sovereignty many times retract and withhold that kind of light for ends best known to itself. But in reference to those operations which are essential to the divine life, we must suppose that it hath a fixed and stated course, in which its influence shall be communicated in order to it. Our next business therefore is,

[2.] To add several considerations by which the truth of the thing assented may be manifested. And the

First consideration that occurs, is what hath been suggested to you already, in clearing the ground of the observation which we took up, namely, That we find it enjoined and laid as a command upon those who live in the Spirit, that they walk in the Spirit. For, as you were heretofore told; it would be very strangely unreasonable to enjoin one to walk in the sun-shine at midnight. And we find that this precept of walking in the Spirit is not dropped, as it were, as a casual thing, but even in this very chapter it is urged and pressed, and with a great deal of solemnity. As you see in the 16th ver. This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is introduced here with a solemn preface, This I say; as though he had said, "I understand myself in what I say, I do not speak rashly and at random." And with how great apostolical authority is the precept ushered in! This I say, Walk in the Spirit. We cannot suppose that so solemn a charge should have been laid, if this had not been a certain thing, that the Spirit shall be communicated, its influences shall issue and go forth, as far as is necessary for this purpose, unto the persons that are concerned. We find particular precepts given again and again unto the same purpose; as to instance in that spiritual action, or operation of prayer, we read of praying in the Holy Ghost; (Jude 20.) and praying always in the Spirit, and of worshipping God in the Spirit, as a stated thing, Eph. 6. 18. Phil. 3. 3. It is manifest that the apostle speaks of what was so, and not of what was very rare and occasional. So the charge, Walk in the Spirit, comprehends in it all duty, duty that is to run through our whole course, and intimates plainly that there is a communication of the Spirit always ready to go forth. The thing which is hinted in that other precept, which doth but in terms and expression differ from this, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, Phil. 2. 12, 13. That word *κατεργαζεσθαι*, imports, "labour it out even till it be finished; till you come to the very end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." This too is an injunction, which exceeds its ground, if we do not suppose that the following words are to

be understood in a proportionable sense, "God worketh in you to will and to do," that is, he is always ready to do so unto the finishing of your salvation.

Secondly. We may consider to this purpose that christians are severely blamed when holy and spiritual actions are not done in the proper time and season of them; which would not be charged upon them, if the Spirit were only arbitrarily suspended and withheld so far as was necessary to any such spiritual action. The inactivity, the sloth, the omissiveness of the necessary duty in the season of it, the sluggish performance, the decays and languors that are upon the spirits of christians are charged upon themselves, and, no doubt, most justly, and most righteously so. See but that one instance in Rev. 2. 4, 5. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. Why, if the case were not as we now suppose it, it would only be the unhappiness of a soul to be left destitute of vigour and vital active power, not a crime. But we find it charged with great severity as a crime, that there are declinings from the first love, and that the things are not done, which have been done heretofore. Do we think that God would ever have left the matter so as that the case should admit of this reply? "It is true, the things which have been done heretofore, are not done now, but it is none of my fault, for there was no influence to be had, which was most necessary for the doing of them. My first love is lost, I do not love with that fervour, and life and strength as heretofore; but it is no fault of mine, the Spirit did arbitrarily retire, without my iniquity or transgression, upon which this languor is come upon me." We must understand more of consistency in the precepts, and criminations, and communications of the wise and holy God, than to imagine there was place or room left for such explications.

Thirdly. That the Spirit is apt to communicate itself unto renewed souls for such purposes, we may farther argue from hence, that it always can do it without any prejudice to itself. There is an all-sufficient fulness and plenitude of Spirit; it is a perpetual spring which this influence is to go forth from. And therefore whilst these communications can be afforded without any kind of prejudice, it is not to be supposed (the case being as it is, between it and its own offspring, regenerate souls) but that they will, but that they are, always ready to be given forth: and we are sure that its fulness admits of no abatement by all its communications. The sun hath lost no-

thing of its warmth and influence by spending it upon the world for almost six thousand years together : much less can infinite fulness suffer diminution. I argue,

Fourthly, from hence, that divine influence doth go forth unto all creatures, and is exhibited unto all natures, according as is needful for their proper and connatural actions, and therefore certainly it will not be withheld from the new creature, and the new nature, so far as is necessary for the actions which are suitable to that. For this would be as strange a supposition, as if one would imagine a prince to be mighty liberal in all his provisions for his servants, but apt to starve his own children, the issue of his body : this is a most unsupposable thing. It is by an influence originally divine, that every creature is enabled to act whatsoever it acts ; enabled, not made to act in many cases, but enabled. It is by a divine influence that every plant and tree brings forth after its kind, that the sun shines, that the fire burns, that all actions are done, and all motions set on foot that are any where to be found through the world. He gives to all breath and being : and all things live, and move, and have their being in him. He feeds the ravens, he feeds the sparrows, he takes care of the lilies, and do we think he will starve and famish the souls which he hath made to live spiritually, so as that they cannot be able to act, or have power to move or stir this way or that, in any holy or spiritual action ? This is a thing never to be supposed.

Fifthly. The communicativeness of the Spirit upon this account is hence to be argued, that it is always before-hand with us in its communications. It communicates more than we improve. A very great argument this, that it is not unapt to communicate. Indeed the case is most observably so in the natural world, as I may speak ; that is, that active power and principle that works to and fro throughout, doth in proportion much exceed the passive and receptive capacity. Nothing is more evident. The light and influence of the sun would suffice many thousand such earths ; this earth is too narrow and too limited a thing to receive and improve all the light and influence of the sun. And then as to what falls upon this earth itself, how much is there of seminal virtue that is lost, as it were, from year to year ? As much as might suffice, for ought we know, for ten such earths as this, supposing that all seminal virtue should come to be actually prolific of what is like it in kind. The case is most manifestly so, as to spiritual influences and communications ; we are not straitened there, the straitness and narrowness is in the subject, in ourselves, and that blessed

Spirit always goes beyond us. It is a convictive appeal that the prophet makes in Mic. 2. 7. O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? It argues that there is some defect, some indisposition, or incapacity in the subject, if things do not take, if souls do not prosper. Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? What! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? So the apostle also bespeaks the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 6. 12. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. In what respect doth he mean that they were not straitened in them? He means plain enough, that what of the influence and communication of the Holy Ghost had come forth upon them, to dispose and frame them for that great work of treating and dealing with souls, it was not fully answered by those whom they did treat and deal with: "Ye are not straitened in us." He gives a very great demonstration of it, in what he speaks with such largeness and liberty of spirit, in all that goes before. He speaks like a man triumphing in that large and abundant sense, which he had of those full and flowing communications of the Holy Ghost, which had come in upon him, by which he was enabled to "do all things, to bear all things, to endure all things," to pass through whatsoever difficulties, to be "in stripes, imprisonments, watchings, fastings, with all pureness, long-suffering, kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God," and so on. "O ye Corinthians," saith he, "our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but in your own bowels." This argues the matter we are speaking of, even a *fortiori*. The ministers of the gospel at that time were not fountains, they were but cisterns; and if they were not straitened in the very cistern, much less in the fountain. "Even in that communication which is come so near you, that cistern from whence you are to receive, there ye are not straitened. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels."

Sixthly. We find it frequently insisted upon as matter of prayer, that communications suitable to the actions of a christian, and the divine life might be given forth; but it would be most unreasonable to suppose that we should be taught to pray for an incommunicable thing. This consideration we formerly made use of to prove that such communications are necessary, and it equally serves the present purpose, to prove that they are possible. For as we are not taught to pray but for such things as are of great concernment to us, so we have very little reason to think that we should ever be taught to pray for

such things as are not grantable, or cannot be had. But we find the apostle making it matter of prayer in Eph. 3. 16. That God would grant them according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that so Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, &c. intimating that Christ could have no commerce with their spirits, but by their active faith in him. They must entertain him, and converse with him, believing in him, and drawing influence from him that way; but this could never be done unless they were strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man to this purpose: and therefore this is a thing for which the apostle thought it fit to "bow his knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And so, as we noted upon that other occasion, in praying for the Colossians that they "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," he prays for an influence by which they might be enabled so to walk, which is the same thing as that they might walk in the Spirit. For it can be no other than that influence by which they were so to walk, "being fruitful in every good work," as you have it there expressed also: an influence suited to the actions and operations of the new creature, or of those who are made spiritually alive.

Seventhly. We may farther argue hence, that if we do not suppose the Spirit thus communicative, according as the case requires, then were the whole workmanship of the new creature in vain. For the very end of its creation is the doing of holy and spiritual actions, but they could never be done without such an influence as by which the principles of the new creature may be reduced into act. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2. 10. Now it were a most unreasonable thing, and infinitely unworthy the divine wisdom, that he should create such a creature for such a purpose, and not supply it with influence that can make it serve that purpose. Then might it be said as well in reference to the new creation, as it was said to the lapsed, apostate part of the old, Are all men made in vain? Indeed they made themselves so, unsuitable to the purpose for which they were made. But that there should be an essay to renovate things, a new creation, and such a sort of creature as should now certainly attain the end for which it was made, this is a thing never to be supposed. What was each principle in the new creature made for, but for actions suitable to that principle? Why is faith put into the soul, but that the soul might be enabled to believe? Why love, but that it might act love? Why patience, but that it might exercise patience? But after that these principles are all actually implanted in the soul, without

an influence they cannot be brought forth into act, as hath been formerly shewn ; there must be therefore a communication of the Spirit, it must be still ready to communicate in order to these actings, otherwise the whole frame of the new creature were to no purpose.

Eighthly. We find that christians are called upon, and pressed to increase and abound more and more in good works ; (as in 1 Cor. 15. 58. Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. And in 1 Thes. 4. 1. We exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more) which plainly implies that there is still a proportionable influence thereto, if it were attended to and improved.

Ninthly. Influence for such purpose hath been owned and acknowledged to have been received in a way of prayer, and therefore we are always to look upon it as communicable. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul, Ps. 138. 3. There is a recorded experience. It is but ask, and have. "I have asked, and I have had upon my asking ; influence did come in. He strengthened me with strength in my soul."

Tenthly, and lastly. It is matter of express promise and of faith, and therefore it must be a certain thing that such communication is to be had. Of promise, our Saviour speaks of it most plainly in Luke 11. 13. If ye—being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ? He will give his Spirit to them that ask him, as readily as you do bread to your children, and you have great reason to suppose, much more readily. And in reference to holy and spiritual actions (for these are a christian's fruit) our Saviour tells his disciples that, Let them but abide in him (which is a parallel expression to walking in the Spirit, for it is his Spirit in which they are to walk) and they shall bring forth much fruit. John 15. 5. He hath assured us that it shall be so. And it is matter of faith as it is promised ; for we are plainly told, that we are to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, in Gal. 3. 14. It therefore must be a certain thing before. For faith doth not make its object be, but the object must be pre-existent. That which I am to believe as true, must be true before I believe it ; I do not make it true by believing. That is, I am not to pitch my faith upon an object, which is hitherto false ; and then think to make a falsehood truth by my believing, but that which I am to believe as true, must, as hath

been said, first be true before I believe it, and the truth of the thing is the reason why I am obliged to believe it. If therefore I am to receive the promise of the Spirit, or the promised Spirit, by faith, it must certainly be true before, that it is receivable, that it is to be had, that it, and its influences can be afforded, and are ready to be communicated.

And the case being so, why do we wistly look upon one another with meagre and languishing souls, into which leanness enters, which are wasting, and consuming and pining away under their own distempers? There is an infinite fulness of Spirit, from whence we may have what is suitable to all our need: "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." The apostle brings in that prayer of his when he had been desiring that they might be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, in the before-mentioned Eph. 3. That such communications are to be had as are needful to our walking in the Spirit, it was necessary thus to insist upon it, that we might understand and know to what it is to be imputed, and where all the blame and fault ought to lie, if there be languishings upon us, if we do not walk in the Spirit, if our knees are too feeble, and we cannot walk, if we are become in a spiritual sense cripples, unapt, unable for spiritual motion and action. And therefore it concerns us to bethink ourselves seriously whether there be not the tokens upon us of a spiritual decay, languor, ineptitude for the actions and functions of the spiritual and Christian life. Are there not? Can we say, that God is with us as he hath been wont to be with his people heretofore? If he be with us, why is it thus? According to that expostulation in Judges 6. 13. When, in another sense, that people were in a miserable, decaying state, is it not in a spiritual sense so with us? Do we not fade as a leaf? Are there not grey hairs here and there upon us? If the Lord be with us as formerly by the communications and influences of his Spirit, why are our hearts so low? Why is it that so little grace stirs? Why is there so little faith, so little love to him, and so little appearance and discovery of a heavenly mind? Why do the fruits of the Spirit flourish no more? It concerns us to bethink ourselves. Can we say God is with us as he hath been with his people? or as it may possibly be remembered he hath been with us? With us in our closets? With us in our families? With us at our tables? Is he with us at his own table? Is he with us in our ordinary affairs and converse? Is he with us in our solemn assemblies, as he hath sometime been among us here? Is this Spirit with us, as a Spirit of faith, a Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind. Is it with us as a Spirit of humiliation in such a time

as this, to abase and humble us, and lay us low in the dust before the Lord? Is it with us, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, to enable us to strive and wrestle with heaven, to implore earnestly, and cry aloud for mercy in such a time as this? Is it with us, as a sin-mortifying Spirit, a world-crucifying Spirit; as the Spirit of meekness, and patience, and self-denial, and humility; and as the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, as a holy and a heavenly Spirit? If it be not, if our own hearts must say it is not, it is fit we should know what to say next, that is, that it lies upon us that it is not. It is not because this Spirit is not full, or is less apt to give forth its influences than formerly, but because we do not our part; we do not mind walking in the Spirit as that which doth belong to us, and to our state as our duty. Which is the next thing we have to speak to.

SERMON XVI.*

WE now go on

2. To shew, that it belongs to the state of regenerate persons, to walk in the Spirit, as a *duty*. The former, namely, that it belongs to them as a *privilege*, is implied in the precept, as you have heard; this latter is expressed in it, as you plainly see, Walk in the Spirit. It is a thing enjoined upon christians, or those who are supposed to live in the Spirit, that they walk in it. This therefore doth imply, that somewhat is incumbent upon us as matter of duty, with which a participation of the Spirit, in order to our walking in it, is connected. And it will be here requisite—to say somewhat concerning this connexion, and—to give you an account of those things where-with such participation of the Spirit is connected.

(1.) It is requisite to premise somewhat concerning this connexion. That there is such a connexion is plain to you already, from what hath been said: the precept doth manifestly suppose it. What kind of connexion it is, I shall very briefly shew you, only in these two particulars, namely—that it is a gratuitous, and—that it is yet a sure connexion.

[1.] It is a gratuitous connexion. Not a natural one, as though it could not possibly have been but that, if such and such things should be by way of grace procured, or done for

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any of the children of men, still a farther, and a farther communication of the Spirit must needs ensue. And we know there are many things that are so connected in their own natures that it would imply a contradiction, that one should be, and the other not. But such connexion there is not in the present case. For if we should reflect upon any of the things wherewith we may suppose such a communication of the Spirit to be most connected, it would be apparent that the connexion is most gratuitous, we can reflect upon nothing wherewith it is more eminently connected than with faith, as we shall have occasion to shew presently. But no man can suppose the connexion to be natural between an act of faith exerted and put forth in and by my soul, and a participation consequent there-upon of an influence from the eternal and almighty Spirit of God. For how is it concerned in me, if it did not concern itself? Or what claim, or challenge could there have been, if it had not brought itself under an obligation, of such a divine influence. As well might a worm that crawls upon the earth, command the motions of the sun, or occasion it so and so to communicate its influence and its light. When we say it is a gratuitous connexion, it imports these two things :

First. That it is a connexion made with absolute, sovereign liberty : that such a connexion might have been, or might not have been antecedently to its being settled and made.

Secondly, It imports not only liberty, but complacency in the vouchsafement : that whatsoever is done in such a way is done with delight, that he that doth it, takes pleasure in the doing of it. Indeed both these are manifestly imported in that expression in Phil. 2. 13. It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Of his good pleasure, that is, so as that he might have forborne so to work, if it had pleased him ; and while he doth so work in us, it doth most highly please him so to work, or to vouchsafe that co-operative influence. He doth it with delight ; as it were, enjoining his own act, and gratifying himself in the benignity of his own nature, from whence it doth proceed that he works with such creatures as these.

In both these ways we must understand it to be gratuitous, that there is any such connexion between any thing of our duty, and such a participation of the Spirit. It is gratuitous the former way antecedently to any such connexion made and settled, as hath been shewn. It is gratuitous in the latter sense continuedly all along, while this connexion doth hold, as it will perpetually hold. For though it be true indeed, that after this connexion is once made and settled, he, who had made and settled it, hath brought himself under an obligation, so as

that he will not rescind it, as we shall presently shew you, and therefore it is not now continued upon such terms, as that it may, or may not be; yet it is gratuitous still in the latter sense, that is, as being continued with complacency, he never repenting that he hath made such a connexion, but remaining in the same mind still, and always; that we doing so and so, or there being such dispositions and frames of spirit inwrought in us, they shall be earnest and pledges to us of still farther communications of his Spirit, according to the tenour of his own law and rule, *habenti dabitur*, "to him that hath shall be given." So it is a gratuitous connexion.

[2.] It is a sure connexion. Most stable and firm, such as whereof we need not fear an alteration. This may seem not so well to agree with the former; if it be so free and gratuitous, then some may think that it should not be so sure. But the apostle hath taught us to argue otherwise in this case, and to understand the matter quite after another tenour, in that passage of his, in Rom. 4. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed. That is, the evangelical promise in general, whereof this, of the communication of the Spirit is one great part, yea, itself sometimes goes, in the language of the New Testament under the name of—the promise. Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost for the promise is to you and your children, in Acts. 2. 38, 39. It is therefore free, that it might be sure. This, I confess, according to the manner of men, would not be thought good logic. Things in reference whereto men act freely, or are left to their liberty, one would think were very unsure. But it is not so with the blessed God in this case. We are so much the more ascertained by how much the more the root and foundation of this connexion is in grace. For we must consider how grace hath laid out its own method, and made way for the pursuing and bringing about its own great design. Consider it in reference to this very case, the communication of the Spirit; it was obtained by a Mediator; it was so designed and determined, that no influence of the Spirit should go forth in order to saving purposes unto the lost and apostate children of men, but in and through a Mediator. Therefore it is told us again and again in Scripture that it is he that sends it, or if the Father be said to send it, that he would send it in his name. Both these forms of expression you have in the 14th and 15th chapters of John's gospel, and to the same purpose, somewhat in the 16th. And he was made a curse for us, for this purpose, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, in Gal. 3. 14.

And hereupon, upon the susception and undertaking of the Mediator, a covenant is established and settled on sure promises, a system of sure promises comprized and formed up together, in which, as was said before, this is the main thing, that the Spirit should be given forth. Now the whole undertaking of the Mediator must otherwise fail and come to nothing, and all these promises, which are yea, and amen in him, 2 Cor. 1. 20. So that hence it cannot but be that, though, as you have heard, this is a connexion most arbitrarily made, yet it is a most sure and certain connexion notwithstanding; inasmuch as the Spirit, wheresoever it is given forth, is given forth through a Mediator and upon the promise. And so we must understand the tenour of this connexion, as that upon such duty the participation of the Spirit will still ensue, in farther and farther degrees; and where there is no such thing as is incumbent upon us in a way of duty, there we cannot promise it to ourselves in any certain stated course, though according to its absolute liberty, it can go forth and let out its influence when, and where it pleases.

(2.) We are now to consider the things themselves that are charged upon us as matter of duty, wherewith the participation of the Spirit is connected. And they are such as these:

[1.] A sense of our indigent state in this respect: that we stand in the greatest need of this blessed Spirit and its vital influences, for all the purposes of the Christian life: that we can do nothing, nothing as we should, not turn a hand, or move a foot without it. It was most reasonable, that the gradual communications of this Spirit should be in connexion with such a disposition and temper of soul in us. For do we think it were honourable that the Spirit should be under an obligation there to be and work, where there is no apprehension at all of any work done, but what might as well be done by a common hand; and that it should do the work, and we have the honour of it, that there should be a disposition in us to arrogate it to ourselves, if there be any holy, gracious operation in us, which hath a tendency to our future happy being. Nothing is more apparent than that there was a high congruity in it, that the Spirit should still go forth in its gradual communications and exertions of its influence, so as that there be a sense still preserved in the subject to be gradually wrought upon, that without it we can do nothing. We may easily see how the matter stands in this respect, if we do but consider where there have been most manifest languishings and decays, feebleness and weakness, as to all the actions and operations of the spiritual life. As to instance in the church of Laodicea, it is plain they were got into a posture very unsuitable unto

walking in the Spirit, and see what their sense was of themselves, and of their own state all this while : Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Rev. 3. 17. If they are blind and maimed creatures, whom this Spirit is to have the conduct of, it doth justly insist upon this, that they reflect, and understand themselves to be blind and maimed, that they cannot go without being led, without being supported and borne up in their way all along. And while there is little of this sense among us of our great need of the continual influence of the blessed Spirit in order to the conducting the whole course of our walking, it is not much to be wondered at, if this Spirit do suspend and restrain its influences, and be at a very great distance from us. And I am afraid there is very little of this sense among us at this day, that it is too generally thought, that we can do well enough without the Spirit. There is not that notion and apprehension, yet there seems to be that practical judgment, "we do not need the Spirit;" and when we are left destitute of it in a great measure, we do not feel a need of it, and there is little complaint that the Spirit is retired, and not given forth as some have found it in former days. Grey Lairs are here and there upon us, yet we know it not (to apply those words to this purpose, which might mean another thing in) Hos. 7. 9. It is with a great many christians as it is said to have been with Samson in Judges 16. 20. He wist not that the Lord was departed from him. God was gone, and his great strength was gone, and he knew it not, but thought to have found it with him as at other times. When we walk on from day to day in a course of ordinary duty, and it may be get nothing by it, no life, no strength, no influence of the Spirit, how little sense is there all this while of its absence from us ! How few, that regret the matter ! One would think there should be strange palpitations and throbbings of heart among us, to think how little there is of the Spirit of the living God breathing in his own ordinances, and through the most sacred, weighty and important truths that we hear from time to time. Methinks our hearts should misgive us, and we should be often recounting with ourselves, What will this come to ? A religion not animated by the Spirit, in which there is no life, no influence, what will it come to ?

[2.] A deep apprehension, or an inward, cordial owning of the arbitrariness of the Spirit and its communications, and of our own great unworthiness thereof. This is another thing wherewith we are to account the stated communications of the

Spirit are connected, That is, that there be not only a sense of our want and indigency, but of our very great unworthiness that ever that pure and Holy Spirit should touch with our souls, or have to do with us. This way is its virtue engaged and drawn forth. How was the virtue of Christ drawn forth in order to the doing of cures which he wrought by the Spirit of God? It is a remarkable instance to our present purpose which we have in Mat. 8. 8. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof;" then goes forth his influence, and does the thing that was desired to be done. To have only this notion in our minds, alas! that signifies little, but to have an intimate, habitual sense inwrought in our hearts, and maintained there, "how most utterly unworthy we, especially, and indeed all men are, that ever there should have been a descent of the blessed Spirit of the living God; that ever it should have let down any thing of its light and influence into this dismal and impure world." Were we more worthy that the Spirit of God should work among us, than among pagans? Where there is an admiring sense of the arbitrariness of grace in this case, and our own great unworthiness, there the Spirit is most apt to issue forth in vital influence according to the necessities of our state. This is true humility and poverty of Spirit, to which that kingdom belongs, which, in the very *primordia* of it, is made up of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Mat. 5. 3. compared with Rom. 14. 17. It is to the humble soul that still more grace is given, but he resisteth the proud, (James 4. 6.) those who are so insolent as to think no divine gift too good for them. But to the humble soul that lies in the dust self-abased, and always in an apt posture to admire grace, if it may but have any, the least, breath of that influence from the blessed Spirit of God; it may be expected still freely to be given forth. The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity—and dwelleth in the high and holy place looks to that man, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word, Isa. lxvi. 2. and lvii. 15. And if you look back to the 14th ver. of that chapter, you find the expressions more apposite to our present purpose, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people? "I would have my people have a fine, easy, pleasant, comfortable walk," (such as is their walk, who walk in the Spirit) and then it is immediately added, "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth, eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones;" so as that they shall be always in a posture for walking

in that way thus cast up, prepared, and made level for them.

[3.] A high valuation of spiritual influence. When we put the greatest price upon spiritual good things, then we are in a disposition to receive them from this blessed Spirit. We find that they who have had most of it, upon whom it hath been continually coming in afresh, have been full of the expressions of their high value of spiritual communications. And even where such things as are considerable, under the notion of means have been so highly valued, it appears rationally to be collected, that the end of those means was more highly valued, and by the expressions, by which hath been signified the value of the means, the value of the end hath been more signified; as when we find so high an esteem expressed of the law of the word of God, by the people of God in Scripture records. Why, how do you understand it, when it is said, The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver, in Ps. 119. 72. (and other passages of like import you have in that psalm, and elsewhere) what? would we understand it otherwise than of the animated word, or law? Was it a dead letter, considered as such, without any reference to the Spirit and its influence working through it and by it, upon which all that price was put? What would that have signified to have had a spiritless law, a law, without any such Spirit going with it as should make it a law of life? The law of the Spirit of life you find it called, that is, according to the impression that it hath upon the heart and soul, in Rom. 8. 2. It was, as such; that the law of God was so highly prized by his people, as it was the medium through which the Spirit was conveyed and given in from time to time. And we may measure our expectations of the Spirit to be communicated and given to us, very much by this thing. What is our estimation of such vouchsafements? If we were indeed to speak the sense of our souls, we might soon find what our value is of external and earthly good things. We know what value we should have for a plentiful estate, and for a peaceful, easy life, so as to have our flesh in all things accommodated, and our sense gratified. Do we find that there is a proportionable estimate of spiritual good things, and that is, that, according as their value is superior, we proportionably esteem them? Is it the sense of our souls, "Lord, whatever thou dost with me, let me have much of thy Spirit. Though I be poor, though I be miserable, though I be pinched with straits and wants all my days, though I be exposed to wanderings, let me have thy Spirit; take away any thing from me, withhold any thing rather than thy Spirit." And hereupon

[4.] Earnest desire of spiritual influence. With that the

participation, the farther participation of it is most surely connected. Vehement longings, where there is some of it, are an earnest of still more. When the heart is panting after God, the living God, as the hunted hart after the water brooks, it is a good pledge, a pre-assuring token, that there shall be still more and more. How express are those words of our Saviour, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled, Mat. 5. 6. To hunger and thirst after righteousness, is to hunger and thirst after spiritual influence; which implies, that without that, all the fruits of righteousness languish, or could never have been. It is indeed a wonderful thing seriously to contemplate, that there should be a connexion between such desires, and such participations thereupon; that ever the great God should have vouchsafed and condescended thus, as to make it become a stated thing, that they who do desire, shall partake, even of that sacred, heavenly influence. We do not find it to be so, as to meaner things, and of a lower nature. We find not any such connexion between the desire of riches, and riches; between the desire of honour, and honour. There is no scripture that saith, If you desire to be rich, you shall be rich; if you desire to be honourable and great in this world, you shall be great and honourable; and if you desire to live a peaceful, quiet life, you shall live such a life in this world. But we find it said, "Desire, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you shall be filled." There is no such connexion of an appetite to natural food, and food; a hungry beggar cannot be sure, that because he is hungry, therefore he shall be satisfied, that his hunger will entitle him to a meal's meat: but here you find the case is so; and how admirable is the grace that hath made it so! Desire spiritual influence, and you shall have it; spiritual communications, and your receivings shall be according to your hearts. For bring a sincere desire directed to God, and terminated upon him, and our Saviour hath assured us, that if we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened to us, and even in this very kind: look into the context of that scripture, Luke 11. 12, 13. All comes at last to this result, How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? It is elsewhere said, good things, and here it is said, the Holy Spirit. According as grace hath laid out to itself its own methods, desire is a drawing thing; it draws in vital influence from the blessed Spirit, even as we attract and draw in breath, in the ordinary course of our breathing. And it must ordinarily be said, that they only are destitute of spiritual influence, who desire it not; and when that may be said, sure there is enough

to be said to justify the retraction or suspension of any such influence.

[5.] Dependence upon it, is another thing wherewith a participation of the Spirit is most surely connected. I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me, Gal. 2. 20. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, and mount up with wings, as eagles, Isa. xl. 31. How did the poor cripple (that we read of in Acts 3.) derive influence by which he was enabled to walk? Why, he looked upon Peter and John, expecting to receive something from them. He drew even with his eye, a craving eye, an expecting eye. "Sure there is something to be gotten of these men." They bade him look upon them, he looked accordingly. And we are bidden to look too: "Look unto me—all the ends of the earth." Isa. 45. 22. We are directed to look upward, to look with an expecting eye: influence will come. As the eyes of all other creatures are put up unto God, and he is not wanting unto the work of his hands, so the new creature is prompted to do so much more, to look up intelligently, and with design: "With design I do it, that I may receive: and he who feeds ravens, and takes care of sparrows, will not famish souls, that look up with an expecting and begging eye, as those that not only know their own need, but believe his bounty." And indeed if there be not this in it, it is most highly to affront him, and then no wonder, if the stream of his bounty be turned another way, and never reach us.

There are other particulars, which I should have spoken to, but I find the time prevents me. The design of all this will much drive this way, (which, I shall so far prevent myself, as to take notice of to you now) to let us see, that if we find not the Spirit communicated to us, so far as is necessary to our walking in the Spirit, it is through our own default, we owe it to ourselves. Pray, do but consider; Is it not our fault, if we are insensible of any need of the Spirit? Or, of our unworthiness of it? Is it not a fault, if we value not the immediate communications of the blessed God from his own Holy Spirit? Is it no fault, to prefer dirt and vanity before the influences of that Spirit, the maintenance of present spiritual life, and the pledge and earnest of an eternal state of life? Is it no fault, if we desire not that there should be a commerce between us and that Spirit? if we think it not a thing worthy to be desired, worthy to be sought after? If we could have the privilege of daily communication with an angel; if we might have him to talk and converse with, to guide and instruct us from day to day in all our ways and affairs, and to comfort

and relieve us in all our troubles and sorrows, would we account meanly of this? or, think it a thing fit to be made light of? But what comparison is there between the commerce of an angel, and such a commerce with the blessed Spirit of God? A being taken into that communion, which is called the communion of the Holy Ghost, in 2 Cor. 13. 14. Is it not our fault, if we want the influences of the Spirit, and it hath no intercourse with us, merely through our neglect, and because we care not for it? Is it no fault, if we will not trust him who hath promised, and whose word is more stable than the foundations of heaven and earth? He hath promised, and we will not believe him! Conscience, if it do its part, will fasten the charge of guilt upon ourselves; that if there be a retraction or suspension of spiritual communications from us, it is through our own fault: we walk solitarily; we do not walk in the Spirit, but we walk alone, and as outcasts from God, as those whom he hath nothing to do with, and who have nothing to do with him, but all through our own default. It is meet that we should admit the conviction of conscience concerning this thing, that we may not indulge ourselves, in so manifest, and so dangerous a delinquency.

SERMON XVII.*

WE go on to mention some more of the particular duties, wherewith such a communication of the Spirit stands connected, as is requisite to our walking in the Spirit ; beside the five already spoken to.

[6.] That we obey its dictates ; resign and yield ourselves to its governing power. This is plainly enough signified in the expressions of being “led by the Spirit,” and “walking after the Spirit,” which we have divers times in Rom. 8. and elsewhere. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This imports a ductile, sequacious, guidable frame and temper, an aptness to yield and comply with all the suggestions of that blessed Spirit. Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. 6. 13. How manifestly distinguishable is the case, between going about to raise a living person that is fallen, and to raise a dead carcass ! A living person yields himself to our helping hand : “So, yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive :”—The word that is there used, is the same with that which we have in Rom. 12. 1. Present yourselves to God a living sacrifice : and it signifies to offer one’s self readily for this or that, to be in a ready posture to do what we are prompted to and put upon. And this walking after the Spirit is frequently inculcated in that forementioned chapter, Rom. 8. 1, 4, 13. And then you have the expres-

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sion of being led by the Spirit, following the other, ver. 14. And again in this chapter where the text lies, Gal. 5. 18. If ye be led by the Spirit. This word signifies to be acted by it: which doth also suppose a compliance on our part, and that we concur; that we be in a prepared posture to act as we shall be from time to time acted. To rebel against the Spirit, vexatiously to contend, to oppose ourselves unto its dictates, we may easily understand cannot be the way to entitle ourselves to its communications. It is promised to be—a guide to lead into all truth,—all that truth which is after godliness: we must understand it chiefly of such truth, as doth concern Christian practice: but if we fall out and quarrel with our guide, and will not obey; what can we expect, but that it should in just displeasure retire, and leave us to walk alone, or to wander as our own inclination shall lead us?

[7.] That we strictly observe and closely adhere unto our rule. This is requisite in order to our having these needful communications of the Spirit: for it dictates according to that external rule: we ought therefore to have our eye upon that, which all along lines the way in which we are to walk. We shall very unreasonably and vainly expect to have the Spirit still constantly following us in all our extravagancies and excursions: if it arbitrarily do so, as the Spirit many times doth; yet we have not reason to expect it should do so in a stated course. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, Prov. 10. 29. In their very way they meet with their strength: holding on their course in that way, they find themselves still to go from strength to strength, (ps. 84. 7.) to grow stronger and stronger, Job 17. 9. When our way is pleasing to God, then we may expect that by his Spirit he should converse with us in our way; that is, if his way like us. Two cannot walk together, except they be agreed; and especially if they be not agreed upon their way. Now we find, that the way wherein we are to walk so as to please God, is prescribed and directed all along by his word. Ye have received of us, saith the apostle, how ye ought to walk and to please God, 1 Thes. 4. 1. He hath directed the way by express precept; in which if we walk and so please him, he will converse with us by his Spirit; then we shall have his continual assisting, directing presence. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Then though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Ps. 37. 23, 24. Enoch gained a testimony of God, that he so walked as to please God. Heb. 11. 5. To be sure he had him for the guide and companion of his way. It is not much that we are under the same lot, that our Lord Christ

was contented to be under. John 8. 29. He that sent me, is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. And he doth require it of us, that as he did keep his Father's commandments, and abide in his love; so we should keep his commandments, and abide in his love, (John 15. 10.) and so have his spiritual presence, or his Spirit to be present with us, by which he saith he would be present with his, when as to his outward man he must be removed and gone out of this state. That passage in ps. 101. 2. is very observable: the Psalmist resolves upon this, that he would behave himself wisely in a perfect way, and that he would walk with a perfect heart; would take care of his way that it was a strait and perfect path in which he should walk: and doing this, you find him in such a posture expecting, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" Walking, as we told you before, connoted a way; and this must be a way suitable to the Spirit, if we reckon upon walking in the Spirit. To walk in the way of our own hearts, and think that the Spirit should be with us there, is certainly a very foolish expectation.

[8.] That we design all the strength and vigour, that we shall receive from the Spirit, in order to our walking unto the divine honour and glory and service, as the end of it. Walking doth connote an end, as well as a way. And to walk in the Spirit must suppose, that there be an end suitable to the Spirit: and what is most immediately from God, ought to be most directly and entirely designed for him. And I doubt not but there is a very common fault among christians as to this thing; they desire spiritual communications for themselves, because it is a very delightful and pleasurable thing to be carried as upon eagles' wings, to have so sensible help in all one's walking: therefore they desire such helps and influences as a privilege; and sometimes lament the retraction and withdrawment of it merely as an infelicity, without charging themselves with sin in the case: and it is in the mean time forgotten, that what God gives upon this account is for himself, and we ought to have the same design with him. The apostle speaks of his way of living, Gal. 2. 20. I live, saith he, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Immediately before you have the end of that life, as here you have the spring and source of it: I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God, ver. 19. Christ feeds and maintains that life, and supplies all the motive and active power belonging to it, which shall be devoted to himself, and terminate wholly upon himself. We are to look upon all these communications

as trusts, which are to be employed according to the pleasure and for the service of him that doth intrust us. Who will commit to your trust, says Christ, the true riches, if ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon? Luke 16. 11. The things of this life are comprehended under the "mammon of unrighteousness:" to these are opposed "the true riches," which must mean spiritual good things; such riches as those spoken of in Eph. 3. 16. where the apostle is praying for the Ephesians, that God would grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by the Spirit in the inner man. Who will trust you with such riches? It implies, that such riches, wherever they are given, are given but as a trust, and therefore are to be employed for him that intrusts us with them. They are talents, that must be improved for him: for that passage doth refer unto the parable concerning the talents, as you may see in the beginning of Luke 16. There is a great hold, as I may say, that the soul hath upon the Spirit and his communications by such an ingenuity as this is; as we many times by ingenuities engage and oblige one another. When this shall be the posture of the soul and its sense towards God; "I only desire such strength and such assistances from thee, to use them for thee, for thy own work:" when we are ready to put such a dedication, such an inscription upon every act that we design to do by such a received power, "To thee, O Lord; Holiness to the Lord; I only desire thy influences, that I may do thy work, and be to the best purpose serviceable to thy name and interest in my sphere and station:" with such a disposition as this we may expect the communication of the Spirit to be most certainly connected.

Thus you see proved, how it doth belong unto the state of living christians, as a duty proper thereto, to walk in the Spirit; or what there is of duty, with which the communications of the Spirit towards our walking in it are connected.

Now by way of *use*, we have several things to infer from all this.

I. Inference. Then if we do not walk in the Spirit, it must needs be our own fault, that we embrace not the privilege that is offered, and do not the duties required. It is fit we should own it as our own fault, and charge it where it ought to lie.

But it may perhaps here be objected; That all these things that have been mentioned, as so many parts of duty in order to our obtaining the needful communications of the Spirit, are themselves the Spirit's operations: and how can they then

be prerequisites unto our obtaining such communications of the Spirit? To this we say,

1. That they are requisite unto farther communications, such as we shall still have farther use for and need of in the continued course of our walking. And it is most highly congruous unto the royalty of the divine bounty, to reward what is done by his own vouchsafement. It is his own rule and measure, that to them which have it shall be given, Luke 8. 18. They that have, shall have more. He gives more grace upon humility. James 4. 6. He giveth more grace; wherefore he saith, he resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Had he given no grace to such before; how became they humble? His grace made them so: but then he gives still more grace.

2. These are so the operations of the Spirit, as that they are our acts too. It is not the Spirit that believes and obeys, but it helps us to do so; as we shall have farther occasion to speak hereafter.

3. In such actings of renewed souls, as are in themselves holy and gracious, there are certain previous actings, that lead to them and which may and usually do end in them. As there is nothing more obvious unto the ordinary experience of christians, than that they many times begin a duty, as to pray or read, to hear or meditate, with very indisposed acts; but the Spirit comes in amidst their work: oftentimes they have no such discernible assistance at first, when they begin to act. Therefore there is somewhat previous unto that which is strictly to be considered as a holy and spiritual act.

4. There is also a preventing influence or grace of the Spirit, unto which it is safe to attribute even those precious tendencies to such acts, to holy and gracious acts. But then we must also know, that this is not always efficacious, so as to end in holy and gracious actions: because the Spirit doth, sometimes from sovereignty, but more ordinarily from paternal justice, retire and withdraw itself, when those first overtures are not complied with. As is manifest from its being intimated to retire and withdraw upon being grieved, being resisted, being vexed; as we must suppose it to be, when it is not duly complied with in the applications it makes to the spirits even of renewed persons themselves; for they, such as "live in the Spirit," are the subject of our present discourse.

And in speaking to you of these previous tendencies unto good and holy actions, (which, it is fit we should attribute unto the Spirit of God, when we find any thing of them; though it doth not work in that over-powering way, as where it puts forth its efficacious influence in order to some holy and spiritual act

to be done;) I shall speak by way of inquiry and demand; that I may the more engage conscience, and set it on work to judge in the case between God and us; whether, if we be destitute of such assistances of the Spirit, as the exigency of our case calls for, it is not to be imputed to our manifest neglect of somewhat that we might have done? Not, that we might have done of ourselves neither; for we cannot of ourselves so much as move a finger, or stir a foot; but that by a preventing influence, in which the Spirit was beforehand with us, we could have done? Whether, if we had tried, we should not have found we might have done such and such things, that would have been in a fair tendency unto those operations or actions that are in themselves strictly and formally holy and gracious? Let us therefore commune a little with our own consciences, upon such heads as these.

(1.) Have we not omitted to reflect and take notice of the way of our own walking, so as to bring the matter to a disquisition? Can I be said in my ordinary course to walk in the Spirit? You know, reflection is a thing common to a christian with another man. It is the privilege of the reasonable spirit of man, that it can reflect upon itself: it is a rational sun, that can invert its beams, and turn them inwards. The bodily eye cannot do so, it cannot see itself: but our mind can see itself, and turn in its beams to look in upon itself. If we did apply ourselves to do so, might we not discern whether our way be transacted so, as that they can say, "This is walking in the Spirit, this looks like the Spirit?" We might surely discern, whether our works can be said to be wrought in God; an expression we have formerly taken notice of. But do not we neglect even to do this? to survey our own way, and to consider with our ownelves, "Is my course like walking in the Spirit?" It will be of no small service to put the question to ourselves often, Is it so, yea or no? am I to approve and like my way, or to disapprove it?

(2.) Might we not be often comparing our walking with that of others? As is usual with them that walk together, to measure with one another. They that are behind, take notice of such and such that are far before them, and thereupon mend their pace, and make after with more expedition. There is no one that mends his course of walking, but it is upon an apprehension of something that needs to be mended: and therefore that reflection is needful, that was spoken of before; either the pace was not quick enough, or not regular enough, or not continued enough. Besides that such faults in our walking are to be discerned by comparing with the rule, referring to the perfect law of liberty; so much might be discovered and

discerned, by comparing our walk with the more spiritual sort of christians. Sure we might do that, if we would. Might we not sometimes set such and such persons in our own thoughts before us, and think with ourselves, What a spiritual life does such a man live! How strict and even is his conversation! How manifest is it, that such a man walks with God, and lives much in heaven! Might we not do so, and accordingly mend our course in walking? For God hath set up such eminent christians to be examples and patterns to others; and we are directed "so to walk, as we have such more eminent saints for our example; to be followers of them, as they are of Christ." We ought to do so. When we compare ourselves only with ourselves, we are likely to get no instruction by it, and to be never the wiser for that. "Those that compare themselves with themselves, doing so only, are not wise;" they never learn any thing. But comparing ourselves with others, then we may receive profit and instruction; and they may be in the very view of their walking, a seasonable reproof of the carelessness and remissness and extravagancy of ours. And what would it be to consider with ourselves sometimes, what even and happy lives do such and such live in comparison of mine! I am weak, and they are strong; I am dull and dead and languid, and they are quick and lively! - This would be somewhat in an apt tendency towards such works and actions, as wherein our spiritual walk doth more directly consist.

(3.) Do we not neglect to consider of the sadness of our case? If we are deserted of the Spirit; we might discern, that it is not so with us as it is with others. Might we not hereupon sit down and think, "How sad a thing it is to be forsaken of that blessed Spirit, or even not to have it discernibly present, to have that Spirit, that doth so freely and graciously converse with some, refuse to converse with me; and so to be out gone by other christians, and left languishing alone!" I might think, that this is not a state to be content and well satisfied in.

(4.) Do we not neglect to—contemplate the fulness and plenitude of the blessed Spirit?—that when we find that we are poor and indigent, there are supplies to be had? Do we not neglect to take actual knowledge of this? This is a tendency to that faith in the Spirit, which is to be acted in order to our drawing forth its communications: for sure I must have the object of my faith in view, before I can perform an act of faith towards it; I cannot act faith upon that, which I do not think of. And by how much the more I do consider the plenitude and liberality and graciousness of this blessed Spirit, so much the more I see in the object to invite and draw forth

an act of faith; and I am to expect the Spirit to concur in this way in order to a kind of vital contract that I come to have with it, by which I actually partake of and draw forth influence from it. I must look to him, in whom my help is. They looked unto him, and were lightened. Ps. 34. 5. A general expression of the gracious influence of God by his Spirit; they looked to him, and quick and lively vital influence was given in.

(5.) Do we not neglect the business of self-excitation? Surely we are not to make nothing of this matter of stirring up ourselves: as there is no walking, but there are some essays previous thereto; some efforts, before a man can be said actually to have walked; a *conatus* or applying of himself thereto. Unto such a *conatus* is the expression accommodate, of girding up our loins in order to our spiritual walk. 1 Pet. 1. 13. Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end, &c. If men design a walk, they do *accingere se*, they put themselves into a ready posture for it. So we might be doing in order to our receiving the Spirit's farther influence: though as was said, we do not do this of ourselves, as we can do nothing without help; yet we should find that this is a help always afforded us, and wherein God is still beforehand with us, and which, if his helping hand were accepted in these things, might lead us farther unto those wherein our walking in the Spirit doth more formally consist. And the many passages, that we meet with in Scripture of this thing, certainly cannot be without their signification, are not set for ciphers in the Bible. As, when the apostle bids Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him, 2 Tim. 1. 6. *ανταρπνευσεν*, that emphatical word. And we are not to think, that what he saith hath reference only to an extraordinary gift conferred upon him; as the very next words that follow shew, ver. 7. For God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind: that is, the Spirit in such operations wherein he is common to christians; though very likely there was a fuller measure of that, which did attend that ordinance of the imposition of hands, whereof the former verse speaks; according as a greater measure was required unto the greater work of an evangelist, above that of an ordinary christian, even a greater measure of special grace, or sanctifying influence. This the apostle would have Timothy to *blow up into a coal*, as the word signifies, to make the fire to live again. You also find it complained of as an accusation in Isa. lxiv. 7. that no man stirred up himself to take hold of the Lord. There is such a striving with ourselves in order to such and such spiritual works and

actions to be done. The word in the last mentioned place is very emphatical, it signifies to *awake*, and is put unto that mood which in the Hebrew language signifies action upon one's self; there is no one that goes about to awake, to rouse himself, in order to the taking hold of God. Somewhat might be done, and is to be done to this purpose. Awake, my glory, says the Psalmist, ps. 57. 8. It is most probable, that by his glory he means his soul: "Awake, O my soul, do not lie drowsing always, thou hast great work to do." That expression, in Col. 3. 16. which we read, admonishing one another, is *εαυτην*, and most properly signifies *admonishing ourselves*. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,—admonishing your own selves, speaking to your own selves, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. He does not say, "We have nothing to do, nothing that lies upon us." Can we never commune with ourselves, and labour to awaken ourselves? We might expostulate with ourselves, as the Psalmist in psalm xlii. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? As in reference to want of comfort, so in reference to indisposition to duty we have much more cause to chide ourselves; "Why dost thou lie dead and asleep, when thou hast so great work to do? Arise, and walk in the light of the Lord." We might charge ourselves, urge our own souls with the obligation of the divine law which we are under; as the psalmist does here, "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him." We might encourage ourselves, as David in that great distress at Ziklag is said to have encouraged himself in the Lord his God. 1 Sam. 30. 6. And we might resolve with ourselves upon this or that thing to be done. I will love thee, O Lord my strength, Ps. 18. 1. There was a resolution of going upon such an exercise of love and praise, before he actually engaged in the work itself: now I will go and apply myself to a love-commerce with God, to enlarge and expatiate in his love and praises. We might say, "We will now apply ourselves to the business, before such and such a work be actually done." Are we not omisive and neglectful in such things?

(6.) Might we not be more frequent, or more diligent, serious and attentive, in our waiting upon the solemn ordinances of God? Many of us might come oftener, or come sooner, or more compose ourselves to attention when we come unto those means, through which the Spirit of God is wont to work, and by which it conveys its influence.

(7.) Might we not be much oftener in our closets, and retire more frequently? Here lies the too little observed cause of the languishing of religion among us at this day; persons

let the business of this world so shuffle out their religion, that they cannot have any time to go and be apart with God; and they are left so much alone, because they are so little alone: as was the saying of a heathen, "I am never less alone, than when I am alone." Many a time might we have a good meeting with God in a corner, if we should allow ourselves to be a little there.

(8.) Might we not be more conversant at such chosen times with the word of God, than we are? It is through that, this Spirit breathes. Thy word hath quickened me Ps. 119. 50. With thy precepts thou hast quickened me, ver. 93. Through that word which was of his own inspiring, *γραφή θεοπνευστος*, *the Spirit chooses still to breathe*. And is it not sad to think, that among many professors, the Bible should lie by as an unprofitable neglected history about the house, as part of the lumber which we know not how to make use of? The word is the Spirit's sword; and the corruptions of our hearts, that are the great hindrances of our walking, need hewing many times; but we put not ourselves under the stroke of the sword by which this should be done. And truly, if any of us should live to see the time or know the place, where it might be a crime to have a Bible in our houses; we should then have cause to reflect, that we have made so little use of it when we had it.

(9.) Might we not be more in prayer upon this subject, that is, for the Spirit? Might we not insist more upon it, and plead more earnestly for spiritual communications? We are told, that "God will give his Spirit unto them that ask him;" unto his children, as readily as we will give bread to ours, rather than a stone. And will not we believe it? Or if we do, is it a thing so little worth our looking after, to have our souls inhabited and animated by that blessed Spirit, to have it reside and rule in us? Is this so little to be regarded by us? I believe there will a time come with many professors, that are now very much asleep, when they shall value a communication of the Spirit more than any one enjoyment whatsoever, however they are now absorbed and drunk up of the spirit of this world. If God rend and take away all from us, and we have nothing else left, nothing to trust to, but what we have from above; then those things from above will be things of value. And what would we desire more, than to be so plainly told as we are, that we shall have for seeking? Your heart shall live, that do seek God. Ps. 69. 32. Would you have plainer words? They shall praise the Lord, that seek him; your heart (their heart) shall live for ever, Ps. 22. 26.

(10.) Might we not more abstain from the things that we

know tend to grieve the Spirit? Many such things there are. It cannot but occur to our own knowledge and thoughts, if at any time they be serious, that such and such things (our own hearts will tell us what they are,) must needs be a grief to the Spirit of God; and if I allow myself to tread such and such paths, the Spirit and I shall grow strangers unto one another. The indulging of sensual desires, allowing a liberty unto enormous and exorbitant passions, letting out our spirits to the minding of earthly things without check and restraint, falling into jangles and contentions with others, cherishing our own enmity and discontents toward such and such persons, or upon such and such occasions. How do we think, that that pure and holy and blessed Spirit will inhabit so impure and licentious and unpeaceable breasts as ours are? The letting out our thoughts and affections to vanity, so as only to be in a disposition to mind trifles and converse with them, cannot but produce a great strangeness. Do not you know, that there is many a serious man who would forsake your company, if he saw that you were in no disposition to mind any thing that was serious; and that to talk of nothing but toys and trifles was pleasing and grateful to you? Serious men would leave you upon this, and think you unsuitable company for them.

SERMON XVIII.*

Inference. In the great business of the Christian life, it is not the Spirit that doth all, but there is a part incumbent upon us. This is manifest, when it is said to belong to us, if we are christians indeed, to “walk in the Spirit.” Then the business of the Christian life is not to be done by the Spirit alone, but we have a part to do therein. And it is not unnecessary to insist a little upon this. I do not reckon this necessary, merely for the confutation of their error, who think otherwise; for I cannot think there are any among us that are of a contrary opinion; though some such there have been, and probably, enough are in the world, who have thought it to be a great piece of perfection to be aspired unto by christians, to be merely passive in the business of religion; and that by how much the more perfect they are, so much the more passive, and do so much the less in religion: but I suspect not any here to be of that mind. It is upon a more practical account, that this is fit to be insisted on: for though we have no such formed apprehensions, yet it is too plain that most carry the matter as if they had nothing to do. And therefore I shall urge some considerations to evince what I suppose to be already our common belief, that there is a part incumbent upon us;

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to enliven a little that belief in our souls, and that we may be stirred up to walk and act more agreeably to it.

1. The very notion of walking in the text, doth most strongly exclaim against the supposition of our having nothing to do. You have been formerly told, that if a man should roll a stone, or drag a log, neither of them would be said to walk. Walking is a voluntary, spontaneous motion, from an internal, and some way or other self-directing principle; when we design the motion and choose the way wherein we are to walk, being enabled to choose aright. And by how much the more the Spirit puts forth its influence in order to our walking, so much the more are we at liberty; with so much the more spontaneity and activity and vigour do we go on in that course unto which it prompts. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, 2 Cor. 3. 17. And I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart, Ps. 119. 32.

2. It is to be argued by an induction of such particulars, as we have formerly instanced in, that we have a part incumbent upon us. Concerning which of them would we say, that they are not our part? That which begins our course, repentance towards God, is not that our work? That, by which we derive strength and vigour for that course of holy motion, that faith which is continually to supply us from the fountain with influence, is not this incumbent upon us? Is it not our part to resign and yield ourselves, and to obey the influences and dictates of the blessed Spirit of God? Can we then yet say or think, that we have nothing to do, or carry as if we had not?

But it may be said, that these are the works of the Holy Ghost, to repent, to believe, to resign, to obey, and the like.

It is very true indeed. But what hinders, that even in reference to one and the same work the Spirit should have its part, and we our part? As when a musician plays upon an instrument, hath not the musician and the instrument each of them a contribution towards the melody? The strings do not sound without being touched, nor is that sound made by touching any thing but those strings. We cannot say in that case, that the musician and the instrument have each of them so their part, as that one note is from the musician and another note from the instrument; but both the musician and the instrument contribute to every note. And so it is plainly here, as to all the holy and spiritual motions and actings of a renewed soul; our spirits and the blessed Spirit of God have a kind of co-operation in reference to every particular act; which plainly shews that we have our part all along, and much more an active part than that similitude we used can serve to represent.

3. Were it not so, that we have such a part incumbent upon

us, all the precepts that contain in them the duty which is charged upon us, (that is, which we ought to call duty, because they are precepts in which it is contained,) would be mere nullities; and so that duty would be no duty. It would indeed evacuate and nullify the whole law of God, and all the precepts that are in his book of one kind or another. For if we have no part belonging to us, then his precepts oblige us to nothing; and that which obliges to nothing, is no obligation: and so it were an apprehension in the tendency of it, directly subversive of the whole frame of the divine government: all his laws over us would carry no signification with them at all. Especially what sense could we make of such laws as these, that do in general express the whole of a christian's course? This, for instance, in the text, "Walk in the Spirit?" Which you have with so much solemnity introduced in another verse of this same chapter; "This I say, Walk in the Spirit; and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. This I say; here would be great solemnity used for no purpose, the precept would carry no signification of a precept at all. And so of other such like scriptures. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. 6. 10. Be strong; What doth that say to us? what doth it mean? Can we tell how to make ourselves strong, and by the Lord's strength? It plainly shews, that regenerate ones have somewhat to do, upon the doing whereof they may expect the communications of the Spirit. So, Eph. 4. 18. Be ye filled with the Spirit. What a strange thing were it to give us such a precept as that, that we should be filled with the Spirit, if we had nothing to do in order thereto! It doth indeed manifestly imply the Spirit's communicativeness, its aptness to communicate itself in all suitable and needful influences: and if we should not understand it so, the words would carry but such a sound, such a faint sound with them, as those that are supposed to be spoken by some charitable man, that should say to one in necessity, naked, and destitute of daily food, "Be thou warm, be thou filled;" but yet gives nothing needful for the body, James 2. 15, 16. And what! Shall we dare to imagine, that the Spirit of God, that Spirit of love and grace, should indite such words as these, "Be ye filled with the Spirit," and yet be altogether unapt to give that which should be needful to the soul? It doth plainly hold forth therefore the communicativeness of the Holy Ghost. But then it doth hold forth also a part incumbent upon us, somewhat to be done by us, whereupon we are to expect such a communication, and in a stated course; and not to expect it otherwise, or upon other terms; whatever

it may arbitrarily and from a sovereignty and royalty of grace do, as it many times doth.

4. Otherwise all the holy and gracious principles, all the graces of the Spirit, were put into the soul in vain ; they were needless and useless things. For pray, what use can we conceive them to be of, but only to dispose the soul for holy and gracious actings ? And then sure it must have something to do. The frame and shape of every thing doth discover, even to a man's eye, what it was made for : the very shape of this or that utensil shews its use, and what purposes it will serve for. So the whole frame of the new creature, all the several principles that are ingredient into the constitution of it, plainly shew what they are for. And the Spirit of God doth expressly tell us, Eph. 2. 10. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath before ordained that we should walk in them. "We are his workmanship:" this is a piece of work wrought and done upon the soul, on purpose to fit him for the doing of good works : it is a very strange thing if yet it should have nothing to do. We might as well suppose, that the apt shape and frame of this or that instrument did contribute nothing to the use ; a musician might as well play upon a log as upon a lute. Why should there be that curious workmanship, as there is wrought in every renewed soul, if all those principles are to lie dead, and there is no work to be done by such a soul ? What is the grace of repentance for, but that the soul might turn to God ? What is self-denial for, but to take it off from self ? Mortification towards this world, but to loose and unhinge the soul from that, that so it may be in a posture disengaged and free for the course of holy spiritual motion ? What is love for, but that it may move vigorously and delightfully ? Fear, but that it may move regularly ? Humility, but that it may move equally ? Patience, but that it may move steadily, and so as not to be diverted by the evils that it meets with in the way ? Take every particular grace severally, or take the entire frame of all together, and the very frame shews us what the new creature was for, that it was not to do nothing, and therefore sure that there is somewhat to be done.

5. Were it not so, this great absurdity would follow, that not only the Spirit of God was to be the agent, (which indeed is itself absurd enough) but that that alone is to be denominated the agent of every work that is to be done. Not only might it be truly said, that the Spirit of God repents and believes ; but that it alone doth so : and consequently that there was no believer in all the world, no penitent, no obedient person ; but only that these names ought to be given to the Spirit of God.

6. The matter is hence plain, that the Scripture doth manifestly say, that such and such things are done by the people of God. It is owned concerning them, that they "do believe, they have believed, they have received the word," and the like; they have "turned to the Lord from dumb idols," they have had "their labour of love," their approved works. I know thy works, I know by way of approbation that thou hast done so and so. And it being plain, that they are said to be the doers of such and such actions; either they do them as duty, as things incumbent upon them to do, or not: if as duty, we have what we seek: if not, then all such persons doing such works must be said to have done more than their duty: but certainly our own hearts will tell us, if we consider, that do what we can we always fall abundantly short.

These things make it plain enough, that there is a part incumbent upon us to do, and that it is not the business of the Spirit of God to do all, in the matter of the Christian life. It was necessary to insist upon this; because, if we do not admit the principle into our hearts, however it may hover in our mind and notional judgment, we can never admit into our hearts any conviction of our neglects of God, nor any impression of the many exhortations and incentives that we have unto greater diligence in the business of our Christian walk. We shall but faintly charge ourselves, and easily put off all with saying, the Spirit of God did not act; and think ourselves very innocent and harmless all the while, though we only trifle and loiter in the great business of Christianity all our days. If we own the principle, that we ought to be doing and walking, as we profess ourselves to be living christians; why do we carry the matter, as if we believed it not? why do we stand still, as if we had nothing to do, as if we could not find our hands? Alas! how little is there among us of that which ought to go under the name of Christian walking! How little can we find in ourselves, upon a serious review of the things done by us from day to day, concerning which we can say, "These were a real part of the Christian walk, and which ought to be referred thither!" Surely, while we so slothfully sit still and do nothing, it is very needful we should be put in mind and have it urged upon us, that we have *not nothing* to do; that we cannot sit still, as having no business, but only as those that mind it not.

III. Inference. We may farther infer hence, not only our obligation to a part incumbent upon us, but also our impotency to walk as we should alone. If it belongs to us as living christians, both as our privilege and duty, to walk in the Spirit; both do argue, that we cannot walk alone as we ought, that we cannot walk acceptably and so as to please God, by ourselves.

Such a charge as this laid upon us, "to walk in the Spirit," carries a plain signification, how incompetent we are for managing the course of our Christian walk without the Spirit. They that walk by the power of another, being acted and supported and borne up; though their walking imports that they do somewhat; yet plainly shew, by their walking so sustained, their impotency to steer that course of themselves. And it is needful, that the conviction of this too, do sink a great deal deeper with us than commonly it doth; that we can do nothing alone of the proper business that appertains to the Christian life; not so much as move a step, or draw a breath, or think a thought; not so much as think any thing, as of ourselves, 2 Cor. 3. 5.

This also is a thing, that is easily assented to, as soon as we hear it: but there is a very great difference to be made, between assenting to such a thing as an opinion, that we think carries with it a very plausible pretence for our own sloth, and having ourselves possessed with a deep and serious sense of it, as a thing plainly spoke out to us by the word of God, and whereof we find an inward experience in our own souls. We are very carefully to distinguish between these two. It is a very common pretence among people, that they can do nothing, no good thing without God, they are impotent to every thing that may have any tendency to their own salvation or to his glory; most profess to believe this, as soon as they hear the words spoken: but it is too apparent by the course that most hold, that this is only an opinion taken up, as supposed to carry a very favourable aspect upon their own sloth; and not that really they are of this faith. It is but a mere assumed opinion with them; not a part of their faith, nor a piece of their experience concerning themselves, that "without God they can do nothing."

It is plain enough, that persons may hold things as an opinion, that have no influence at all to govern their practice, notwithstanding that they are things in their own nature never so practical, or that ever so much concern practice. And it is of some necessity to us to consider, how impotent and ineffectual a thing mere opinion is to govern a man's practice. And to make way for this; that you may see that men hold this doctrine of their own impotency unto any spiritual good but as an opinion, without ever understanding the grounds of it, or without ever considering of what use it should be, or what course they are to take agreeable to such an apprehension; we shall shew a little the insufficiency of mere opinion to regulate practice. Plain it is, that many things that are in their own nature most practical, men have opinions about, which never influence their practice at all. It is a common thing for men

in the whole course of their lives to run counter to an opinion which they hold; as I might instance in sundry of the greatest things, that one can think of. Men are of this opinion, that God is the supreme and rightful Governor of the world; and yet have his laws and authority all their days in contempt. They are of this opinion, that God is omniscient, knows their hearts, and beholds all their ways; and yet never care to approve themselves to his eye in the temper of their spirits or the course of their walking. They are of opinion, that all men as sinners are naturally liable to the wrath and justice of God; and yet never go about to flee from the wrath to come. They are of opinion, that there is a judgment to come, and a state of retribution after this life for what hath been done in it; and yet never make it their concern to be sure, that they are not miserable hereafter, cast in judgment, doomed to perdition, but adjudged to live. Men in their whole course, even all their days, run directly contrary to their own opinion, in the greatest and most important things, that can be imagined; and that shews that it is a mere opinion: for a real, thorough belief of so great and important things, would certainly make other kind of work in their hearts and lives.

And because it is so plain in the general, that men may run all their time against their opinion, and guide their practice quite contrary to their opinion about practical things; it concerns us here to be a little more strict in our inquiry, whether it be not so in this particular case; that is, that men do hold the doctrine of their impotence for spiritual good but as an opinion, which they the more readily comply with, because they think it looks with a very favourable aspect upon that slothful, lazy course, which it is most agreeable to them to hold, and which they are very loth to alter. In this case, it doth them never the more good for being a true opinion; but the mischief to them is, that they hold it but as an opinion and no otherwise: which will appear, if you consider four things. If they held such a truth otherwise than as an opinion, if they believed it with a real faith and experienced the truth of it; it must, in conjunction with the things that I am to mention, make strange impressions upon their spirits, and alterations in their course, beyond what it is found to do. For,

1. Together with this apprehension, that they are impotent, and cannot of themselves walk as they should so as to please God, they also know or might easily know, that they do not walk so, as to have reason to think, that God is pleased with their walking. They may find upon a very easy reflection, that they do not walk in the Spirit: one would think it impossible for many of the looser sort of the professors of Christianity

to resist the evidence of so plain a thing, if they ask themselves the question ; “ Can I say, my course and walking is like walking in the Spirit, such as that I dare entitle the Spirit to it as its author ? ” What ! Is the Spirit the author of your minding earthly things so intently ? of seeking yourselves ? of casting away the thoughts of God and eternity and the other world ? And is not this thy walk ? ” Must not many say so ? Let that then be considered by them that say, they cannot walk so as to please God without the Spirit ; must they not also be forced to say, that they do not walk in the Spirit ? And then add to that,

2. The consideration whither these things tend. While they acknowledge, that to walk so as God may be pleased, without the Spirit, is not possible ; that their present course is not a walking in the Spirit ; and along with these, that it is absolutely necessary for them to walk in such a course, as that God may be pleased with their walking ; certainly it would put a reasonable, considering soul into a distress, if he would but lay these things together : “ I cannot walk as I should without the Spirit, and I find I do not walk according to the Spirit, yet it is necessary for me that I should do so. ” What should be the end of this ? Must it not needs be to put the spirit of a man, if he will reasonably consider it, into the greatest agonies imaginable ? None pretend to hold this doctrine of their own impotency, but the same persons will say that they hold too, that it is necessary for them to please God in their walking. Now while no suitable impression is made, no lively concern excited, answerable to the exigency of such a case ; is it not plain, that all this is but mere opinion, a hovering opinion and no more ? especially if we should add hereto the considering,

3. That the Spirit is not tied to their time : and that no doubt they will grant also. If now they have not the Spirit to influence their walking and enable them in the course of it, they cannot promise themselves that they shall have it the next hour or the next day or the next year.

4. They know withal, that they are not masters of their own time ; and they do not know but that their time may be over and expired, before that blessed Spirit, so often neglected and slighted and resisted, shall ever breathe or do any effectual work upon their souls.

These are things all of them as obvious as that other, that they are of themselves impotent. But take all these things together, and if there were more than mere opinion in the matter, certainly it could not but put such a soul into the greatest distress imaginable. “ What shall I do ? what shall I think of my case ? which way shall I turn myself ? The way wherein I

walk I am sure cannot please God ; I cannot walk better without his Spirit ; that Spirit doth not breathe or move in me in order to my better walking ; I cannot command that Spirit ; my time may shortly be over ; I may be dead and gone out of this world for ought I know, before that Spirit ever come to have any acquaintance with my spirit, any commerce with it, and then what will become of me ?”

All this I urge to this purpose, that it may be taken notice of and reflected upon, how little it signifies for men to have such an opinion of their own impotency, while it is an opinion and no more, while it makes no impression and has no suitable effect. If it were firmly believed, it would certainly infer this, that a soul that finds it can of itself do nothing, would be put upon loud and importunate cries to him, who can help us to do all, and who must do all, that is, do the part appertaining to him in all and in every thing that is to be done by us in order to our eternal well-being. But to lie still with the apprehension that I can do nothing, when (as the case doth signify) if I can do nothing I must perish, supposing that nothing be done by a higher and a stronger hand ; and to be unconcerned whether that hand ever touch my heart, ever come near me, yea or no : this is a dreadful and a monstrous thing, and might make men amazed at themselves ; that they can profess to believe a doctrine that carries with it a face of so much terror to their own souls, and never be startled at it ; be well pleased that it casts a favourable aspect upon their sloth, while it carries a most frowning one upon their safety : unless it had that tendency with it, (which in most it hath not,) to bring men upon their knees, and to set them on crying and importuning for that grace and Spirit, without which it is true we can do nothing, and without which therefore nothing but perishing is to be looked for.

SERMON XIX.*

THERE are yet some farther inferences remaining from the subject we have been upon.

IV. Inference. Since it belongs to the state of persons living in the Spirit to walk in the Spirit; then we have great reason to admire the grace of the Spirit, that renders this a possible thing to us, to walk under its constant governing influence. But this I shall not insist upon, because there is no part or work and office of the Holy Ghost in reference to the spirits of men, on which we have insisted already, but hath given us some occasion to reflect upon its wonderful vouchsafement, that it would have so much to do with such as we are. But as this occasion is renewed to us of considering it, we should renew our observation and admiration of its strange condescension in this thing. For would any of us deign to be obliged to have from day to day the guiding and conducting of all the motions of a worm? And we do not need to be told, how much less considerable we are in reference to the great God and the blessed Spirit, than any the most despicable worm is to us.

V. Inference. Since it belongs unto the state of persons that own themselves christians or to live in the Spirit, (for to own Christianity, and to pretend to a life in the Spirit, is all one; those that profess themselves christians, do not profess

* Preached May 1, 1678.

themselves dead christians, but living ones ;) since it belongs, I say, to such to walk in the Spirit; then we may too plainly collect, that there are very many going under that name, that walk so, as doth not belong to the state unto which they pretend. A plain and sad collection! as the apostle speaks, Phil. 3. 18. Many walk, as I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, as enemies of the cross of Christ: as those who are driving on a continual hostility against Christianity, and the design for which Christ was crucified. I doubt there is not less cause now for such a complaint, but only less sense. It is very observable, how great a stress is laid upon the visible decorum of a christian's walk, up and down in Scripture; how they are required to be noted that walk disorderly; how earnestly christians are exhorted and besought to walk becomingly and laudably, so that loveliness and amiableness, might appear in their walk. I (Paul) the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, Eph. 4. 1. And he saith to the Thessalonians, 1 Epis. 2. 12. Ye know, how we have exhorted and comforted, (or, encouraged) and warned every one of you, even as a father doth his children; that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. And in the epistle to the Colossians, he prays on the behalf of them, as we find him elsewhere praying for others, (chap. 1. 10.) that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; so as to make a fair representation of him to the world, that he might be thought well of among men for the sake of them that bear his name and own a relation to him. And so to walk, that is, such worthy and becoming walking, and walking in the Spirit, do manifestly imply one another. Whatsoever is worthy, honourable, graceful in the conversation of christians can never be wanting, if their conversation be under the constant government and regulating influence of this Spirit. And if the conversation of any be otherwise governed in the general course and tenour of it, it is plain that it is under the government of some other principle. Do but see, as to this, the proportionable opposition between two passages, namely, this of the text, If ye live in the Spirit, walk also in the Spirit, and that in Col. 3. 7. In which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them: referring to what was mentioned before and after, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, (ver. 5.) and to anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications, &c. ver. 8. &c. The course of any one's motion is so conform and agreeable to the principle that lives and rules with him. If we live in the Spirit, we walk in

the Spirit ; as it is most befitting we should : but if we live in the flesh, that is, under the government and dominion of fleshly principles, accordingly we shall walk ; our walking will easily shew, what principle is *regnant* and in dominion.

It would therefore be worth our while here, to point out some particular things, that are too observable in the walkings of many, and import a most direct repugnancy and contrariety unto walking in the Spirit ; which are a manifest disclaiming of it, as none of the governing principle of those who so walk.

1. A visible conformity to this world speaks a contrariety to walking in the Spirit, and a repugnancy to all its influences and dictates. Plain it is, that the Scripture frequently speaks of a spirit and a spirit, that differently and oppositely influence the walking of men. We are told of the spirit of the world, and of the Spirit that is of God, 1 Cor. 2. 12. And as here we read of walking in the Spirit, the blessed Spirit of God ; so we read of another course of walking, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience ; among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, Eph. 2. 2, 3. As the holy, blessed Spirit of God, wherever that rules, doth conform and frame the course and tenour of any one's conversations, in whom it so rules, unto the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that course of walking that is directed and prescribed there : so the spirit and genius of the world doth conform men unto this world, and make them shape their course agreeable to it ; as that expression with the emphasis signifies, Rom. 12. 2. *συσχηματίζεσθε*, Be not conformed, (be not configured) unto this world, so as that your visible shape, frame and mould, that appear obvious to every eye, should represent this world and hold an agreement with that ; but Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that we may prove (or, give proof) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God ; as those that are framed according to that, delivered up into the mould by which that will is revealed, to wit, that of the gospel-revelation ; as in Rom. 6. 17 Now when the course of any men's walking is such as that of the men of the world in common, what doth it discover, but that these men are acted by the spirit of this world, are ingulphed and swallowed up of that spirit ? one spirit animates both the world and them, and makes them one piece with this world. And if we should give characters of the worldly spirit, you would easily see what the walking and conversation of many doth bespeak to be the governing principle of their lives, or the spirit that influenceth their conversations. Plain it is, that the spi-

rit of this world is an atheistical spirit, a sensual and earthly spirit, a vain and proud, a malicious and contentious spirit. Concerning what is obvious in the walking of persons, agreeable unto such characters as these, give me leave a little to particularize.

(1.) A conversation or course of walking transacted in the continual neglect of God, is certainly a conversation governed not by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of this world. Conceive of that Spirit, under what notion you will; they that walk under the governing influence of the Spirit of God, walk as before God: Walk before me, and be thou perfect, or upright, Gen. 17. 1. Walk as in God's sight, as under his eye; as that injunction again and again repeated to Abraham doth import. They walk in the fear of the Lord. Acts 9. 31. They, whose hearts must tell them upon reflection, "I do not use to walk in the fear of the Lord from day to day, my life is led as 'without God in the world,' as if I were my own, as if my ways were all in my own disposal, as if it were the sense of my heart, Who is Lord over me? I am under my own inspection, as if no account was to be taken of my walk;" it will be too plain for such to collect, that they walk not by the Spirit, or after the Spirit, or in the Spirit. For what! Do we think, that that blessed Spirit can be the author to us of our forgetting God and leading ungodly lives? Doth that cast his fear out of our hearts, which is peculiarly called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord? Isa. 11. 2. Doth that Spirit drive us away from God, or make us unapprehensive of his presence, or make us strangers to him or as persons unrelated?

(2.) A continued over-eager pursuit of the things of this world, speaks a conversation governed by the spirit of the world, and not by the Spirit of God. I shall not speak here of grosser sensualities, when it is the business of men's lives to satisfy the viler lusts of the flesh; about which the case is so plain, that they cannot have the face to pretend, that the Spirit of God should be the author of such things in their conversation. And the antithesis is plain, where we have the same precept before, at the 16th verse of this chapter: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." So, fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and it is certain you do not walk in the Spirit; for the case is as broad as long. But there is what is more refined, what custom and common practice hath made less scandalous. It is hardly thought scandalous to be an earthly-minded man; one, all whose design and the whole business of whose life is, to lay up and amass together a great deal of the treasures of this earth. And it is a latent evil in very great part; for one man may be very busy in the affairs

of this world, and another the like, and yet we cannot tell where the hearts of one and the other are. There may be many good thoughts, many holy affections and actings of grace, intermingled with worldly affairs and business. But notwithstanding that, there is much (as I say,) of the air of a man's spirit to be seen in the constant course and tenour of his walking; a certain mien and deportment, that speaks the complexion of his soul. They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh, and carry a scent with them that shews their spirits. We say, that such or such a course of walking, such a word, or such an action is *par homini, just like the man*, speaks the spirit of the man. When the apostle comes to distinguish between walking and walking, conversation and conversation; we see how the minding of earthly things, and having a conversation in heaven, are made the distinctive characters of men, Phil. 3. 19, 20. Our business now is to put persons severally upon reflection into their hearts and upon their own walking. It is no matter what we appear, or are thought of by one another: but it greatly concerns us to be informed ourselves, what principle or spirit it is that governs our walking, or hath the management of our conversation. And it is no such difficult, at least no impossible thing, upon a faithful scrutiny and frequent observation, to understand, what are the great designs that we are driving in this world, and in what channel the main stream of our actions and endeavours run; what are the thoughts of our hearts, what their secret dispositions and propensions. When worldly objects, and worldly thoughts and affections are most tasteful to us, and most habitual and customary, what shall we say concerning this case? When it is so through the whole course of our walking, who must govern this walk? Will we dare to entitle the Spirit of God unto the conduct and government of such a conversation as that? When my walking from day to day is nothing else but a continual tending towards this earth, a motion downward; is it the Spirit of God that so thrusts me down and depresses my spirit? Is it that, that makes me grovel in the dust, and lead the life of a worm, when I might lead that of an angel, when I might have my way above, as the way of the wise is?

(3.) A contentious course of life speaks the Spirit of God to be none of the governor of our walk, but another spirit most surely. When men love wrangles and contentions, cannot endure to live out of the fire, is the Spirit of God the author of that impure fire? It is very much to be observed, what the apostle hath reference to more immediately and directly in this very context, wherein the text lies. He first gives this precept of walking in the Spirit: "This I say

then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. See what the foregoing verses are, ver. 14 15. All the law is fulfilled in one word, by love, (as he had said, ver. 13. By love serve one another.) For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Upon which follows the 16th verse. The lusts of the flesh, which he hath more direct and immediate reference to there, are therefore those opposed to love, such as wrath and anger, envy and malice; which he speaks of, both afterwards in this chapter, and in other of his epistles. When he comes to enumerate the fruits of the flesh, how great a part do things of this nature bear in that enumeration! The works of the flesh are manifest. And after he had named some things more grossly sensual, (as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,) and inserted idolatry and witchcraft; then comes hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings. And when he had been speaking in Col. 3. 5. of the earthly members, that must be mortified, and for which the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; in the which, says he, to those Colossians, Ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them: then he adds, But now put ye off all these: and as he had named before fornication, uncleanness, &c. so now he goes on with the enumeration, mentioning farther anger, wrath, malice, &c. And indeed, if we will not admit the apprehension deep into our souls, that it is the great business of the Spirit of God equally and alike to enliven and animate both parts of the law of God, to turn both tables into a living law, transcribing them out upon the hearts and spirits of men; we shall never understand the great work that is to be done upon our souls by the Spirit. We are to consider it as the Spirit of all love and goodness and benignity and meekness; and then we may easily apprehend what the fruits of this Spirit will be: The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, Eph. 5. 9. It is the reproach of our age, and (which is worse than that,) of the Christian name, that there are so many that conjoin eminent pretences unto religion and spirituality with a froward, peevish, perverse, envious, spiteful, malicious spirit, as if it were possible for these things to consist. It is not strange indeed, that a worse spirit should assume and put on some appearances of a better; but you may be sure, that that better Spirit will never disguise itself by the appearances of the worse. This is the spirit of the world, a spirit that fills the world with nothing but violence and mischief, that shakes and agitates the world with perpetual commo-

tions ; as it will be with it, till it dissolve and be burst asunder at last by the malignity of its own wickedness, and the wrath of God in a just conjunction therewith, coming upon the wicked. That spirit, and a just *nemesis*, that falls by way of punishment upon it, hath made the world so miserable a region, the very region of all miseries. So that any one may see, that the spirit of the world hath a great hold upon one, if things of this import are frequently observable in the course of his conversation.

(4.) A vain walk is a discovery, that a man's conversation is acted and influenced by the spirit of this world, which is a vain spirit. Such persons, who can never find a time wherein to be serious, who shew this to be a thing that their hearts abhor from, whom you will find always vain, though you should meet them never so often in a day ; as if a serious thought fled from their spirits as none of its element, and could not tell how to dwell with them ; the very countenance and shew of whose conversation discovers a continual vanity of spirit. What ! will such persons dare to entitle the Spirit of God to this ? Hath the Spirit of God the government of that man's walking, in which there is no face of seriousness, so that any one that sees hath reason enough to conjecture, that seriousness was never akin to his spirit or had any place in it ? This is matter of very necessary self-reflection. We ought to commune with ourselves very strictly and closely about this thing. Do we think, that we are under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and yet from day to day are unacquainted with what it means to have serious thoughts and serious frames and dispositions of heart about us ?

Thus far conformity to the world speaks an unsuitableness and contrariety to walking in the Spirit. There are some other things, that are thought to be out of that verge, and are really beside the more common and general course of this walk ; which I shall mention under distinct heads from this, because I would speak of them as they are thought of. And therefore I add,

2. Opinionativeness in the business of religion. Many would little suspect this to be from the spirit of this world. And indeed it is not the very common course of this world to be much concerned about such matters. But no matter from what spirit it is, their own or a worse ; it is not from the Spirit of God ; that doth not influence their course. But take aright what I mean by the term, opinionativeness : I mean such as in their ordinary course from day to day either are wholly taken up about speculative matters that either really belong or that they affix to religion ; or who only converse about

most practical matters speculatively, as if they were matters of mere opinion, and not to be turned or employed to practice at all. A course of walking so managed as this is, certainly is not governed by the Spirit of God; that is the author of no such persuasion to men. Men are apt to think, that they are very safe from sin and blame in this case, because they are things of religion that they are much concerned and taken up about. But what things? and how are they employed about them? Either they converse about the mere skirts and borders of religion, and keep as remote as they can from the heart and vitals of it, from having any commerce with such things: or, if the case be not so, then they presume (and it is a dreadful presumption,) to touch those most sacred things with sacrilegious hands; to alienate the great and deep things of God, that appertain to his kingdom and glory, from their proper and genuine purposes; that, whereas they should be the food of souls, and the maintenance of the spiritual life, they employ them only to feed curiosity, and so to satisfy a more refined lust. This is the very truth of the case; and so a great many, that are persons of more leisure and vacancy from worldly affairs, spend most of their time. It is doleful to think, that the design, for which such important things are revealed to men, should be so little understood, and so little complied with and answered; and that so great things should be perverted unto so mean and ill services. And it is sad to think of the injury, that such men do to their own souls; they go with famished souls from day to day, while they have most proper and suitable nutriment for them just at hand, but they will not touch, so as to taste or feed upon these things. Starving in the midst of plenty is their case: or, as if a sick man should have by him, in the midst of his languishing sickness, some vial of very choice and precious spirits, that in all likelihood would be relieving to him, and save him from death, but he keeps it by him, and will discourse to you very curiously and philosophically concerning the nature and virtues of this thing, yet never uses it, nor apprehends that he is concerned to use it, or that his case requires it; and so dies away with a medicine at hand all the while, that might have saved his life.

3. Formality in the business of religion. There are those, who think it cannot serve their turn to speculate all their days, and, therefore would practise somewhat. But what do they practise? They run in a common road of duties, in which their own hearts upon reflection must confess, that they never had the Spirit of God breathing, and never concerned themselves to have it so. Theirs is a religious course, and a course of practical religion; but transacted at the utmost distance from

the Spirit of God, so that it and their spirits have no communion from day to day in the whole. They keep up a course of prayer in their families, and it may be in secret, go to public assemblies, attend upon the ordinances of worship; but never find any impression upon their spirits, any warmth or vigour there, or a concern to look after any such thing. They think it well, that such a duty is over, and so that they have walked in a religious course, though strangers to God and his Spirit all their time.

4. The neglect of the very form itself. This is too known a thing among some persons; and that too under the very pretence of spirituality. They are too spiritual to be bound to any forms of worship, or any stated course of duties; and that they may be more spiritual, they cast prayer out of their families, and refuse, yea even disdain to live worshipping lives, as too mean for them. All these things speak a manifest repugnancy to walking in the Spirit. Sure it is not the governor of any such courses of walking as these are.

I shall shut up all with some brief reflections upon both parts of the text together.

Since it doth belong to the Spirit of God by office, as we have asserted, to maintain the life, and govern the walk and motions of christians; we should bethink ourselves, of how indispensable necessity the communications of the Spirit for these purposes are unto us, and how miserable a thing it is to be destitute of them. We may easily apprehend how necessary that influence is, without which we can neither live nor move; and how miserable to be without it. For represent we to ourselves the case of a poor languishing, decrepit creature, that is deprived of motive power; suppose him barely to live, to have only life enough to feel himself in a dying condition: now is not the case so with many christians, with some of those perhaps that have the root of the matter in them? They have but life enough to feel that they are consuming, and in a state wherein the things that remain are even ready to die! That they do not die, is by divine vouchsafement, and none of their care. What a sad case is this! And is it not yet worse with some? They have not life enough to take any notice or make inquiry, whether they live or no: as persons that have some life left, yet may be incapable of considering whether they are alive or dead. Many christians are so far from having that motive power, that is to be exercised in the managing of their own walk, and that would be so if it were not through their own default; that they are so altogether destitute also of any presence and vital influence of the Spirit, as never to consider the

case, "Am I alive or dead?" certainly this is a miserable case. And I may add,

Where there is manifestly such a destitution, there are some things very intolerable, which yet are too obvious and frequent with many such. As,

1. It is intolerable in the case, to lay aside the apprehension of the distinction between natural and spiritual life, natural motion and spiritual. You may judge, whether the mention of this be not a most apparently needful thing. Are there not a great many, that spend away their days without so much as ever considering, that there is such a thing as spiritual life and motion, or a region all replenished with spiritual vitality, a distinct sphere from that of nature wherein alone the rest of men do converse? They never think of such a distinction between world and world; an orb of spiritual life, and that mean and lower orb, wherein only a low kind of animality fills up all.

2. It is an intolerable thing in this case, to be unapprehensive of what others find of the power and vigour of that other Spirit moving in them, even the Spirit of God. There are some, that through grace (though that is not to be vaunted of, and whereof it becomes none to make a boast:) feel the stirrings of another principle in them different from the spirit of this world: they feel themselves to live, and to be acted in their walk by a spring of life that is from above. Those that are without the experience of such a thing, will not believe there is any such thing; as if their knowledge were to measure all realities; as though they were persons commensurate in their understandings and experience with the whole nature of things. This is just for all the world, as if a languid person, that hath been long confined to his chamber and bed, should come to fancy, that his chamber and bed were all the world, and that there was nothing done among mankind but what he saw transacted in his own chamber: or, if we should imagine a thinking power to be in the grave, and fancying a grave to be the universe.

3. It is intolerable, to be unconcerned about our own part and share in the world and region of spiritual life and motion, of which we have been speaking. If there were a line to be drawn through the world to sever in it the living from the dead, and a public notification were made of this all the world over; would we not then be very much concerned, on which side of the line we placed ourselves, that it might be where we could live? But how strange is it, that in this case many are altogether unconcerned, whether they are of the living or the dead side! Lastly,

4. It is a most intolerable thing, to make no applications to this Spirit, after we know its distance. We know it is the Author of life, and the Governor of all holy motions unto all the children of God; and yet never apply to it, never put up a sigh or a cry! How intolerable is this! Do we know of any other way to live? Do we think, that there can be such a thing as everlasting life, a life which shall never end, and which shall also never begin? Sure if there be such a life, it must sometime begin: and where will we place the beginning of it, but in the communication of that spiritual, vital influence, which once given is a spring of living waters, springing up unto life eternal?

Let us so therefore represent the matter to ourselves; the high dignity, the immense fulness, the royal magnificent bounty and benignity of this blessed Spirit; that we may neither neglect it, nor distrust it. Represent the tendency of all its communications, and consider them as the earnest and pledges of everlasting life, the blossomings of glory; that which must be our preparation for, and our assurance of, the eternal state of life. And then desire such communications above all things. Let this be the sense of our souls, (sure there is reason enough, that it should be so;) "Lord, let me rather live in poverty, live in pain and sickness, live in disgrace all my days, than live without thy Spirit! Let not that Spirit be a stranger to me, but inhabit and dwell in me, act and move me; and be my condition what it will in all external respects, I am unsolicitous, I will never capitulate, never dispute the matter." Till that Spirit come to be valued by us, and all its communications, even above all things else that men are wont to count dear to them, we have reason to apprehend, that it and we are like to continue still strangers; and if we be strangers to the divine Spirit, we must be acquainted with misery both in this and another state.