

LIFE AND DEATH,
NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL,
COMPARED.

CHAP. IV.

Of death in sin. All unregenerate men spiritually dead. Spiritual death two-fold. Moral. Metaphorical. Life natural, what it is, and wherein it consists. Death natural, with its necessary consequents. The supernatural life of Adam in innocency, in its principle, acts, and power. Differences between it and our spiritual life in Christ. Death spiritual a privation of the life we had in Adam; a negation of the life of Christ. Privation of a principle of all life to God. Spiritual impotency therein. Differences between death natural and spiritual. The use of precepts, promises, and threatenings. No man perisheth merely for want of power. No vital acts in an estate of death; the way of the communication of spiritual life. Of what nature are the best works of persons unregenerate. No disposition unto spiritual life under the power of spiritual death.

ANOTHER description that the Scripture gives of *unregenerate men* as to their state and condition, is, that they are *spiritually dead*. And hence, in like manner, it follows, that there is a necessity of an *internal, powerful, effectual work of the Holy Ghost on the souls of men, to deliver them out of this state and condition by regeneration*. And this principally respects their wills and affections, as the darkness and blindness before described doth their minds and understandings. There is a spiritual life whereby men live unto God; this they being strangers unto, and alienate from, are *spiritually dead*. And this the Scripture declares concerning all unregenerate persons, partly in direct words, and partly in other assertions of the same importance. Of the first sort the testimonies are many and express; Eph. ii. 1. 'You were dead in trespasses and sins;' ver. 5. 'When you were dead in sins;' Col. ii. 13. 'And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh;' 2 Cor. v. 14. 'If one died for all, then were all dead;' Rom. v. 15. 'Through the offence of one many are dead;' ver. 12. 'Death passed on all men, for that all have

sinned.' And the same is asserted in the second way, where the recovery and restoration of men by the grace of Christ is called their quickening, or the bestowing of a new life upon them. For this supposeth that they were dead, or destitute of that life which in this revivification is communicated unto them. For that alone can be said to be quickened, which was dead before. See Eph. ii. 5. John v. 21. vi. 63.

This *death* that unregenerate persons are under is twofold: 1. *Legal*, with reference unto the sentence of the law. The sanction of the law was, that upon sin man should die. 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death;' Gen. ii. 17. Upon this sentence, Adam and all his posterity became dead in law, morally dead, or obnoxious unto death penally, and adjudged unto it. This death is intended in some of the places before mentioned; as Rom. v. 12. and it may be also, 2 Cor. v. 14. For as Christ died, so were all dead. He died penally under the sentence of the law, and all were obnoxious unto death, or dead on that account. But this is not the death which I intend, neither are we delivered from it by regeneration, but by justification; Rom. viii. 1.

2. There is in them a *spiritual death*, called so *metaphorically* from the *analogy* and proportion that it bears unto *death natural*. Of great importance it is to know the true nature hereof, and how, by reason thereof, unregenerate men are utterly disabled from doing any thing that is spiritually good, until they are quickened by the almighty power and irresistible efficacy of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, to declare this aright, we must consider the nature of life and death natural; in allusion whereunto, the spiritual estate of unregenerate men is thus described:

Life in general, or the life of a living creature, is, *Actus vivificantis in vivificatum per unionem utriusque*, 'The act of a quickening principle on a subject to be quickened, by virtue of their union.' And three things are to be considered in it.

1. The *principle* of life itself. And this in man is the rational living soul; called נשמת חיים, Gen. ii. 7. 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.' Having formed the body of man of the dust of the earth, he designed him a principle of life superior unto that of brute creatures, which is but the exurgency and spirit

of their temperature and composition, though peculiarly educed by the formative virtue and power of the Holy Ghost, as hath been before declared. He creates for him, therefore, a separate, distinct, animating soul, and infuseth it into the matter prepared for its reception. And as he did thus in the beginning of the creation of the species, or kind of human race, in its first individuals, so he continueth to do the same in the ordinary course of the works of his providence for the continuation of it. For having ordained the preparation of the body by generation, he immediately infuseth into it the living soul, the breath of life.

2. There is the *actus primus*, or the quickening act of this principle on the principle quickened in and by virtue of union. Hereby the whole man becomes יהוה נפש א 'living soul;' $\Psiυχικὸς \text{ ἄνθρωπος}$, a person quickened by a vital principle, and enabled for all naturally vital actions.

3. There are the *acts of this life itself*. And they are of two sorts. (1.) Such as flow from life; as life. (2.) Such as proceed from it; as such a life, from the principle of a rational soul. Those of the first sort are natural and necessary; as are all the actings and energies of the senses, of the locomotive faculty, as also what belongs unto the receiving and improving of nutriment. These are acts of life; whence the Psalmist proves idols to be dead things, from the want of them; so far are they from having a divine life, as that they have no life at all; Psal. cxv. 4—7. These are acts of life as life, inseparable from it, and their end is, to preserve the union of the whole, between the quickening and quickened principles. (2.) There are such acts of life as proceed from the especial nature of this quickening principle. Such are all the elicit and imperate acts of our understandings and wills; all actions that are voluntary, rational, and peculiarly human. These proceed from that special kind of life, which is given by the especial quickening principle of a rational soul.

Hence it is evident wherein *death natural* doth consist. And three things may be considered in it. (1.) The separation of the soul from the body. Hereby the act of infusing the living soul, ceaseth unto all its ends. For as a principle of life unto the whole, it operates only by virtue of its union with the subject to be quickened by it. (2.) A cessation of all vital actings in the quickened subject. For that union

from whence they should proceed is dissolved. (3.) As a consequent of these, there is in the body an impotency for, and an ineptitude unto, all vital operations. Not only do all operations of life actually cease, but the body is no more able to effect them. There remains in it, indeed, *potentia obedientialis*, a 'passive power' to receive life again, if communicated unto it by an external efficient cause. So the body of Lazarus being dead, had a receptive power of a living soul. But an active power to dispose itself unto life or vital actions, it hath not.

From these things we may, by a just analogy, collect wherein life and death spiritual do consist. And to that end some things must be previously observed. As, 1. That Adam in the state of innocency, besides his natural life, whereby he was a living soul, had likewise a supernatural life, with respect unto its end whereby he lived unto God. This is called, the 'life of God;' Eph. iv. 18. which men now in the state of nature are alienated from; the life which God requires, and which hath God for its object and end. And this life was in him supernatural; for although it was concreated in, and with the rational soul, as a perfection due unto it, in the state wherein, and with respect unto, the end for which it was made; yet it did not naturally flow from the principles of the rational soul; nor were the principles, faculties, or abilities of it, inseparable from those of the soul itself, being only accidental perfections of them, inlaid in them by especial grace. This life was necessary unto him, with respect unto the state wherein, and the end for which, he was made. He was made to live unto the living God, and that in a peculiar manner; to live unto his glory in this world, by the discharge of the rational and moral obedience required of him, and to live afterward in his glory, and the eternal enjoyment of him as his chiefest good and highest reward. That whereby he was enabled hereunto, was that life of God, which we are alienated from in the state of nature. 2. In this life, as in life in general, three things are to be considered: (1.) Its principle. (2.) Its operation. (3.) Its virtue; or habit, act, and power.

(1.) There was a *quickenning principle* belonging unto it. For every life is an act of a quickenning principle. This in Adam was the image of God; or an habitual conformity unto God,

his mind and will; wherein the holiness and righteousness of God himself was represented; Gen. i. 26, 27. In this image he was created, or it was concreated with him, as a perfection due to his nature, in the condition wherein he was made. This gave him an habitual disposition unto all duties of that obedience that was required of him. It was the rectitude of all the faculties of his soul, with respect unto his supernatural end; Eccles. vii. 20.

(2.) There belonged unto it *continual actings*, from, or by virtue of, and suitable unto, this principle. All the acts of Adam's life should have been subordinate unto his great moral end. In all that he did, he should have lived unto God, according unto the law of that covenant wherein he walked before him. And an acting in all things, suitable unto the light in his mind, unto the righteousness and holiness in his will and affection, that uprightness or integrity, or order that was in his soul, was his living unto God.

(3.) He had herewithal, *power* or *ability* to continue the principle of life in suitable acts of it, with respect unto the whole obedience required of him; that is, he had a sufficiency of *ability* for the performance of any duty, or of all, that the covenant required. And in these three did the supernatural life of Adam in innocency consist. And it is that which the life whereunto we are restored by Christ doth answer. It answers unto it, I say, and supplies its absence with respect unto the end of living unto God, according unto the new covenant that we are taken into. For neither would the life of Adam be sufficient for us, to live unto God according to the terms of the new covenant; nor is the life of grace we now enjoy, suited to the covenant wherein Adam stood before God. Wherefore some differences there are between them, the principal whereof may be reduced into two heads.

1. The *principle of this life* was wholly and entirely in man himself. It was the effect of another cause, of that which was without him, namely, the good will and power of God; but it was left to grow on no other root but what was in man himself. It was wholly implanted in his nature, and therein did its springs lie. Actual excitations by influence of power from God, it should have had. For no principle of operation can subsist in an independence of God, nor apply itself unto operation without his concurrence. But in the life where-

unto we are renewed by Jesus Christ, the fountain and principle of it is not in ourselves but in him, as one common head unto all that are made partakers of him. 'He is our life;' Col. i. 3. and our life (as to the spring and fountain of it) is hid with him in God. For he quickeneth us by his Spirit; Rom. viii. 10. And our spiritual life, as in us, consists in the vital actings of this Spirit of his in us; for, 'without him we can do nothing;' John xv. 3. By virtue hereof we 'walk in newness of life;' Rom. vi. 4. We live therefore hereby, yet not 'so much we, as Christ liveth in us;' Gal. ii. 20.

2. There is a difference between these lives with respect unto the *object* of their vital acts. For the life which we now lead by the faith of the Son of God hath sundry objects of its actings, which the other had not. For whereas all the actings of our faith and love, that is, all our obedience, doth respect the revelation that God makes of himself and his will unto us; there are now new revelations of God in Christ, and consequently new duties of obedience required of us, as will afterward appear. And other such differences there are between them. The life which we had in Adam and that which we are renewed unto in Christ Jesus, are so far of the same nature and kind, as our apostle manifests in sundry places; Eph. iv. 23, 24. Col. iii. 10. as that they serve to the same end and purpose.

There being, therefore, this *two-fold spiritual life*, or ability of living unto God, that which we had in *Adam*, and that which we have in *Christ*, we must inquire with reference unto which of these it is, that *unregenerate* men are said to be *spiritually dead*, or dead in trespasses and sins. Now this, in the first place, hath respect unto the life we had in Adam: for the deprivation of that life, was in the sanction of the law, 'Thou shalt die the death.' This spiritual death is comprised therein, and that in the privation of that spiritual life, or life unto God, which unregenerate men, never had, neither *de facto*, nor *de jure*, in any state or condition. Wherefore with respect hereunto they are dead only negatively; they have it not; but with respect unto the life we had in Adam, they are dead privatively, they have lost that power of living unto God which they had.

From what hath been discoursed, we may discover the

nature of this spiritual death, under the power whereof all unregenerate persons do abide. For there are three things in it. 1. A *privation* of a principle of spiritual life enabling us to live unto God. 2. A *negation* of all spiritual vital acts; that is, of all acts and duties of holy obedience acceptable unto God, and tending to the enjoyment of him. 3. A total *defect* and want of *power* for any such acts whatever. All these are in that death which is a privation of life, such as this is.

First, There is in it a *privation* of a principle of spiritual life, namely, of that which we had before the entrance of sin, or a power of living unto God according to the covenant of works; and a negation of that which we have by Christ, or a power of living unto God according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. Those therefore who are thus dead have no principle or first power of living unto God, or the performance of any duty to be accepted with him, in order to the enjoyment of him, according to either covenant. It is with them as to all the acts and ends of life spiritual, as it is with the body as to the acts and ends of life natural, when the soul is departed from it. Why else are they said to be dead?

It is objected that there is a wide difference between death *natural*, and *spiritual*. In death natural the soul itself is utterly removed and taken from the body: but in death spiritual it continues. A man is still, notwithstanding this spiritual death, endowed with an understanding, will, and affections. And by these are men enabled to perform their duty unto God; and yield the obedience required of them.

Ans. 1. In life spiritual, the soul is unto the principle of it, as the body is unto the soul in life natural. For in life natural the soul is the quickening principle, and the body is the principle quickened. When the soul departs it leaves the body with all its own natural properties, but utterly deprived of them which it had by virtue of its union with the soul. So in life spiritual, the soul is not in and by its essential properties the quickening principle of it, but it is the principle that is quickened. And when the quickening principle of spiritual life departs, it leaves the soul with all its natural properties entire as to their essence, though morally corrupted. But of all the power and abilities, which it had by virtue of its union with a quickening principle of

spiritual life, it is deprived. And to deny such a quickening principle of spiritual life superadded unto us by the grace of Christ, distinct and separate from the natural faculties of the soul, is upon the matter to renounce the whole gospel. It is all one, as to deny that Adam was created in the image of God, which he lost, and that we are renewed unto the image of God by Jesus Christ. Hence, 2. Whatever the soul acts in spiritual things, by its understanding, will, and affections, as deprived of, or not quickened by, this principle of spiritual life, it doth it naturally not spiritually, as shall be instantly made to appear.

There is, therefore, in the first place, a *disability* or impotency unto all spiritual things to be performed in a spiritual manner, in all persons not *born again by the Spirit*, because they are spiritually dead. Whatever they can do, or however men may call what they do, unless they are endowed with a quickening principle of grace, they can perform no act spiritually vital, no act of life, whereby we live to God; or that is absolutely accepted with him. Hence it is said, the ‘carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be;’ Rom. viii. 7. so then, ‘they that are in the flesh cannot please God;’ ver. 8. Men may cavil whilst they please about this carnal mind, and contend that it is only the sensitive part of the soul, or the affections as corrupted by prejudices and depraved habits of vice. Two things are plain in the text. First, That this carnal mind, is in all mankind whoever they be, who are not partakers of the Spirit of God, and his quickening power. Secondly, That where it is, there is a disability of doing any thing that should please God; which is the sum of what we contend for, and which men may with as little a disparagement of their modesty deny, as reject the authority of the apostle. So our Saviour, as to one instance, tells us, that no man can come unto him unless the Father draw him; John vi. 44. And so is it figuratively expressed where all men being by nature compared unto evil trees, it is affirmed of them, that they cannot bring forth good fruit unless their nature be changed; Matt. vii. 18. xii. 33. And this disability as to good is also compared by the prophet unto such effects, as lie under a natural impossibility of accomplishment; Jer. xiii. 24. We contend not about expressions. This is that

which the Scripture abundantly instructeth us in. There is no power in men by nature whereby they are of themselves, upon the mere proposal of their duty in spiritual obedience, and exhortations from the word of God unto the performance of it, accompanied with all the motives which are meet and suited to prevail with them thereunto, to perceive, know, will, or do any thing in such a way or manner, as that it should be accepted with God, with respect unto our spiritual life unto him according to his will, and future enjoyment of him, without the efficacious infusion into them, or creation in them, of a new gracious principle or habit enabling them thereunto; and that this is accordingly wrought in all that believe by the Holy Ghost, we shall afterward declare.

But it will be objected, and hath against this doctrine been ever so, since the days of Pelagius, that a supposition hereof renders all *exhortations, commands, promises, and threatenings*, which comprise the whole way of the external communication of the will of God unto us, vain and useless. For to what purpose is it to exhort blind men to see, or dead men to live, or to promise rewards unto them upon their so doing? Should men thus deal with stones, would it not be vain and ludicrous, and that because of their impotency to comply with any such proposals of our mind unto them. And the same is here supposed in men, as to any ability in spiritual things.

Ans. 1. There is nothing in the highest wisdom required in the application of any means to the producing of an effect, but that in their own nature they are suited thereunto; and that the subject to be wrought upon by them, is capable of being affected, according as their nature requires^a. And thus exhortations, with promises and threatenings, are

^a Magnum aliquid Pelagiani se scire putant quando dicunt, non juberet Deus quod scit non posse ab homine fieri, quis hoc nesciat? sed ideo jubet aliqua quæ non possumus ut noverimus quid ab illo petere debeamus. Ipsa enim est fides quæ orando impetrat, quod lex imperat. August. de Grat. et lib. Arbit. cap. 16.

O homo cognosce in præceptione quid debeas habere; in corruptione cognosce tuo te vitio non habere; in oratione cognosce unde accipias quod vis habere. Idem. de Corrupt. et Grat. cap. 3.

Mandando impossibilia non prevaricatores Deus homines fecit sed humiles, ut omne os obturetur et reus fiat totus mundus Deo; accipientes igitur mandatum, et sentientes defectum clamabimus ad cælum. Bernard. Serm. 50. in Cant.

Quamvis dicamus Dei donum esse obedientiam, tamen homines exhortamur ad eam: sed illis qui veritatis exhortationem obedienter audiunt, ipsum donum dei datum est, hoc est, obediuntur audire; illi autem qui non sic audit non est datum. August. de Dono Perseverant. cap. 14.

in their kind, as *moral instruments*, suited and proper to produce the effects of faith and obedience in the minds of men. And the faculties of their souls, their understandings, wills, and affections, are meet to be wrought upon by them unto that end. For by men's rational abilities they are able to discern their nature, and judge of their tendency. And because these faculties are the principle and subject of all actual obedience, it is granted that there is in man a natural, remote, *passive power* to yield obedience unto God, which yet can never actually put forth itself without the *effectual* working of the grace of God, not only enabling, but working in them *to will and to do*.

2. Exhortations, promises, and threatenings, respect not primarily our present *ability*, but our *duty*. Their end is, to declare unto us, not what we *can do*, but what we *ought* to do. And this is done fully in them. On the other hand, make a general rule, that what God commands, or exhorts us unto, with promises made unto our obedience, and threatenings annexed unto a supposition of disobedience, that we have power in and of ourselves to do, or that we are of ourselves able to do; and you quite evacuate the grace of God, or at least make it only useful for the more easy discharge of our duty, not necessary unto the very being of duty itself, which is the Pelagianism anathematized by so many councils of old. But in the church it hath hitherto been believed, that the command directs our duty, but the promise gives strength for the performance of it.

3. God is pleased to make these exhortations and promises to be *vehicula gratiæ*, the means of communicating spiritual life and strength unto men. And he hath appointed them unto this end, because, considering the moral and intellectual faculties of the minds of men, they are suited thereunto. Hence these effects are ascribed unto the word, which really are wrought by the grace communicated thereby; James i. 18. 1 Pet. i. 23. And this, in their dispensation under the covenant of grace, is their proper end. God may therefore wisely make use of them, and command them to be used towards men, notwithstanding all their own disability savingly to comply with them, seeing he can, will, and doth himself make them effectual unto the end aimed at.

But it will be farther objected, 'That if men are thus

utterly devoid of a principle of spiritual life, of all power to live unto God; that is, to repent, believe, and yield obedience; is it righteous that they should perish eternally, merely for their disability, or their not doing that which they are not able to do?' This would be to require brick and to give no straw; yea, to require much where nothing is given. But the Scripture every where chargeth the destruction of men upon their wilful sin, not their weakness or disability.

Ans. 1. Men's disability to live to God is their sin. Whatever, therefore, ensues thereon, may be justly charged on them. It is that which came on us by the sin of our nature in our first parents; all whose consequents are our sin and our misery; Rom. v. 12. Had it befallen us without a guilt truly our own, according to the law of our creation and covenant of our obedience, the case would have been otherwise. But on this supposition (sufficiently confirmed elsewhere), those who perish, do but feed on the fruit of their own ways.

2. In the transactions between God and the souls of men, with respect unto their obedience and salvation, there is none of them but hath a power in sundry things, as to some degrees and measures of them, to comply with his mind and will, which they voluntarily neglect. And this of itself is sufficient to bear the charge of their eternal ruin. But,

3. No man is so unable to live unto God, to do any thing for him, but that withal he is able to do any thing against him. There is in all men, by nature, a depraved vicious habit of mind, wherein they are alienated from the life of God. And there is no command given unto men for evangelical faith or obedience, but they can, and do put forth a free positive act of their wills in the rejection of it, either directly or interpretatively, in preferring somewhat else before it. As they cannot come to Christ unless the Father draw them, so they will not come that they may have life; wherefore their destruction is just and of themselves.

This is the description which the Scripture giveth us, concerning the power, ability, or disability, of men in the state of nature as unto the performance of spiritual things. By some it is traduced as fanatical and senseless, which the

Lord Christ must answer for, not we. For we do nothing but plainly represent what he hath expressed in his word, and if it be foolishness unto any, the day will determine where the blame must lie.

Secondly, There is in this death an *actual cessation* of all vital acts. From this defect of power, or the want of a principle of spiritual life, it is, that men in the state of nature can perform no vital act of spiritual obedience; nothing that is spiritually good, or saving, or accepted with God, according to the tenor of the new covenant; which we shall in the second place a little explain.

The whole course of our obedience to God in Christ is the 'life of God;' Eph. iv. 18. That life which is from him in a peculiar manner, whereof he is the especial author, and whereby we live unto him, which is our end. And the gospel, which is the rule of our obedience, is called the 'words of this life;' Acts v. 20. That which guides and directs us how to live to God. Hence all the duties of this life are vital acts, spiritually vital acts, acts of that life whereby we live to God.

Where, therefore, this life is not, all the works of men are *dead works*. Where persons are dead in sin, their works are dead works. They are so all of them, either in their own nature, or with respect unto them by whom they are performed; Heb. ix. 14. They are dead works because they proceed not from a principle of life, are unprofitable as dead things, Eph. v. 11. and end in death eternal; James i. 15.

We may then consider how this *spiritual* life, which enableth us unto these *vital acts*, is derived and communicated unto us. 1. The original spring and fountain of this life is with God; Psal. xxxvi. 9. 'With thee is the fountain of life;' the sole spring of our spiritual life is in an especial way and manner in God. And hence our life is said to be 'hid with Christ in God;' Col. iii. 3. that is, as in its eternal producing and preserving cause. But it is thus also with respect unto all life whatever. God is the living God, all other things are in themselves but dead things; their life, whatever it be, is in him efficiently and eminently, and in them is purely derivative. Wherefore,

2. Our spiritual life, as unto the *especial nature* of it, is *specificated* and discerned from a life of any other kind, in

that the *fulness* of it is communicated unto the Lord Christ as mediator; Col. i. 19. And from his fulness we do receive it; John i. 16. There is a principle of spiritual life communicated unto us from his fulness thereof, whence he quickeneth whom he pleaseth. Hence he is said to 'be our life;' Col. iii. 4. And in our life, it is not so much we who live, as Christ that liveth in us, Gal. ii. 20. because we act nothing but as we are acted by virtue and power from him; 1 Cor. xv. 10.

3. The *fountain* of this life being in God, and the *fulness* of it being laid up in Christ for us, he communicates the power and principle of it unto us by the Holy Ghost; Rom. viii. 11. That he is the immediate efficient cause hereof, we shall afterward fully evince and declare. But yet he doth it so, as to derive it unto us from Jesus Christ; Eph. iv. 15, 16. For he is the life, and without him, or power communicated from him, 'we can do nothing;' John xv. 5.

4. This spiritual life is communicated unto us by the Holy Ghost, according unto, and in order for, the ends of that *new covenant*. For this is the promise of it, That God will first write his law in our hearts, and then we shall walk in his statutes; that is, the principle of life must precede all vital acts. From this principle of life, thus derived and conveyed unto us, are all those vital acts whereby we live to God. Where this is not, as it is not in any that are dead in sin, for from the want hereof are they denominated dead, no act of obedience unto God can so be performed, as that it should be an act of the life of God; and this is the way whereby the Scripture doth express it. The same thing is intended, when we say in other words, that without an infused habit of internal inherent grace, received from Christ by an efficacious work of the Spirit, no man can believe or obey God, or perform any duty in a saving manner, so as it should be accepted with him. And, if we abide not in this principle, we let in the whole poisonous flood of Pelagianism into the church. To say that we have a sufficiency in ourselves, so much as to think a good thought, to do any thing as we ought, any power, any ability, that is our own, or in us by nature, however externally excited and guided by motives, directions, reasons, encouragements of what sort soever, to believe or obey the gospel savingly in any one in-

stance, is to overthrow the gospel and the faith of the catholic church in all ages.

But it may be objected, 'That, whereas, many unregenerate persons may and do perform many duties of religious obedience, if there be nothing of spiritual life in them, then are they all sins, and so differ not from the worst things they do in this world, which are but sins; and if so, unto what end should they take pains about them? Were it not as good for them to indulge unto their lusts and pleasures, seeing all comes to one end? It is all sin, and nothing else; why do the dispensers of the gospel, press any duties on such as they know to be in that estate? What advantage shall they have by a compliance with them? Were it not better to leave them to themselves, and wait for their conversion, than to spend time and labour about them to no purpose?'

Ans. 1. It must be granted, that all the duties of such persons, are in *some sense* sins. It was the saying of Austin^b, that the virtues of unbelievers are *splendida peccata*. This some are now displeased with; but it is easier to censure him than to confute him. Two things attend in every duty that is properly so. (1.) That it is accepted with God: and, (2.) That it is sanctified in them that do it; but neither of these are in the duties of unregenerate men. For, they have not faith; and 'without faith, it is impossible to please God;' Heb. xi. 6. And the apostle also assures us, that unto the defiled and unbelieving, that is, all unsanctified persons not purified by the Spirit of grace, all things are unclean, because their consciences and minds are defiled; Tit. i. 15. So their praying is said to be an abomination, and their plowing, sin. It doth not therefore appear, what is otherwise in them or to them. But as there are good duties, which have sin adhering to them, Isa. lxiv. 6. so there are sins which have good in them. For *bonum oritur ex integris, malum ex quocunque defectu*. Such are the

^b Manifestissime patet in impiorum animis nullam habitare virtutem; sed omnia opera eorum immunda esse atque polluta, habentium sapientiam non spiritualement sed animalem, non cœlestem sed terrenam. Prosper. ad Collat. cap. 28.

Omne etenim probitatis opus nisi semine veræ exoritur fidei, peccatum est, inque erratum vertitur, et sterilis cumulat sibi gloria pœnam. Prosper. de Ingratis. cap. 16.

Multa laudibilia atque miranda possunt in homine reperiri, quæ sine charitatis medullis habent quidem pietatis similitudinem, sed non habent veritatem. Idem. ad Ruffin. de lib. Arbit.

duties of men unregenerate. Formally, and unto them, they are sin; *materially*, and in themselves, they are good. This gives them a difference from, and a preference above, such sins, as are every way sinful. As they are duties, they are good, as they are the duties of such persons, they are evil, because necessarily *defective* in what should preserve them from being so. And on this ground, they ought to attend unto them, and may be pressed thereunto.

2. That which is good *materially*, and in itself, though vitiated from the relation which it hath to the person by whom it is performed, is *approved*, and hath its acceptation in its proper place. For duties may be performed two ways. (1.) In hypocrisy, and pretence, so they are utterly abhorred of God in matter and manner; that is such a poisonous ingredient as vitiates the whole; Isa. i. 11—14. Hos. i. 4. (2.) In integrity, according unto present light and conviction, which for the substance of them are approved. And no man is to be exhorted to do any thing in hypocrisy; see Matt. x. 21. And on this account also, that the duties themselves are acceptable, men may be pressed to them. But, 3. it must be granted, that the same duty, for the substance of it in general, and performed according to the same rule as to the outward manner of it, may be accepted in or from one, and rejected in or from another. So was it with the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. And not only so, but the same rejected duty may have degrees of evil, for which it is rejected, and be more sinful in and unto one, than unto another. But we must observe, that the difference doth not relate merely unto the different states of the persons by whom such are performed; as, because, one is in the state of grace, whose duties are accepted; and, another, in the state of nature, whose duties are rejected, as their persons are. For although the acceptation of our persons, be a necessary condition for the acceptation of our duties, as God first had respect unto Abel, and then unto his offerings; yet, there is always a real specific difference between the duties themselves, whereof one is accepted, and the other rejected, although, it may be unto us, it be every way imperceptible. As in the offerings of Cain and Abel, that of Abel was offered in faith, the defect whereof in the other, caused it to be refused. Suppose duties, therefore, to be every

way the same, as to the principles, rule, and ends, or whatever is necessary to render them good in their kind; and they would be all equally accepted with God, by whomsoever they are performed, for he is no accepter of persons. But this cannot be, but where those that perform them are partakers of the same grace. It is, therefore, the wills of men only, that vitiate their duties, which are required of them as good; and, if so, they may justly be required of them. The defect, is not immediately in their state, but in their wills and their perversity.

4. The *will of God* is the rule of all men's obedience. This they are all bound to attend unto; and if what they do, through their own defect, prove eventually sin unto them, yet the commandment is just and holy, and the observance of it justly prescribed unto them. The law is the moral cause of the performance of the duties it requires, but not of the sinful manner of their performance. And God hath not lost his right of commanding men, because they by their sin have lost their power to fulfil his command. And if the equity of the command doth arise from the proportioning of strength that men have to answer it, he that by contracting the highest moral disability that depraved habits of mind can introduce, or a course of sinning produce in him, is freed from owing obedience unto any of God's commands; seeing all confess that such a habit of sin may be contracted, as will deprive them in whom it is, of all power of obedience. Wherefore,

5. *Preachers of the gospel* and others have sufficient warrant to press upon all men, the duties of faith, repentance, and obedience, although they know that in themselves they have not a sufficiency of ability for their due performance. For, (1.) it is the *will and command of God* that so they should do, and that is the rule of all our duties. They are not to consider what man can do or will do, but what God requires. To make a judgment of men's ability, and to accommodate the commands of God unto them accordingly, is not committed unto any of the sons of men. (2.) They have a *double end* in pressing on men the observance of duties, with a supposition of the state of impotency described. [1.] To prevent them from such courses of sin, as would harden them, and so render their conversion more difficult if not

desperate. [2.] To exercise a means appointed of God for their conversion, or the communication of saving-grace unto them. Such are God's commands, and such are the duties required in them. In and by them, God doth use to communicate of his grace unto the souls of men, not with respect unto them as their duties, but as they are ways appointed and sanctified by him unto such ends. And hence it follows that even such duties as are vitiated in their performance, yet are of advantage unto them by whom they are performed. For, 1st. by attendance unto them, they are preserved from many sins. 2nd. In an especial manner from the great sin of despising God, which ends commonly in that which is unpardonable. 3rd. They are hereby made useful unto others, and many ends of God's glory in the world. 4th. They are kept in God's way, wherein they may gradually be brought over unto a real conversion unto him.

Thirdly, In this state of *spiritual death*, there is not in them who are under the power of it any *disposition, active and inclining* unto life spiritual. There is not so in a dead carcass unto life natural; it is a subject meet for an external power to introduce a living principle into; so the dead body of Lazarus was quickened and animated again by the introduction of his soul. But in itself it had not the least active disposition nor inclination thereunto. And no otherwise is it with a soul dead in trespasses and sins. There is in it *potentia obedientialis*, a power rendering it meet to receive the communications of grace and spiritual life. But a disposition thereunto of its own it hath not. There is in it a remote power, in the nature of its faculties meet to be wrought upon by the Spirit and grace of God. But an immediate power disposing and enabling it unto spiritual acts it hath not. And the reason is, because natural corruption cleaves unto it, as an invincible unmoveable habit constantly inducing unto evil, wherewith the least disposition unto spiritual good is not inconsistent. There is in the soul, in the Scripture language (which some call canting), 'the body of the sins of the flesh;' Col. ii. 11. which, unless it be taken away by spiritual circumcision through the virtue of the death of Christ, it will lie dead in to eternity. There is therefore in us that which may be quickened and saved. And this is all we have to boast of by nature. Though man by sin be made like the beasts that perish, being brutish and

foolish in his mind and affections; yet he is not so absolutely, he retains that living soul, those intellectual faculties which were the subject of original righteousness, and are meet to receive again the renovation of the image of God by Jesus Christ.

But this also seems obnoxious to an objection from the instances that are given in the Scripture, and whereof we have experience concerning sundry *good duties* performed by men unregenerate, and that in a *tendency* unto living unto God, which argues a disposition to spiritual good. So Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, and Herod heard John Baptist gladly, doing many things willingly. And great endeavours after conversion unto God, we find in many who never attain thereunto. So that to say there is no disposition unto spiritual life in any unregenerate person, is to make them all equal, which is contrary to experience.

Ans. 1. There is no doubt but that unregenerate men may perform many *external duties*, which are good in themselves, and lie in the order of the outward disposal of the means of conversion. Nor is it questioned but they may have real designs, desires, and endeavours, after that which is presented unto them as their chiefest good. But so far as these desires or actings are merely natural, there is no disposition in them unto spiritual life, or that which is spiritually good: so far as they are supernatural, they are not of themselves. For,

2. Although there are no *preparatory inclinations* in men, yet there are *preparatory works upon them*. Those who have not the word, yet may have convictions of good and evil, from the authority of God in their consciences; Rom. ii. 14, 15. And the law, in the dispensation of it, may work men unto many duties of obedience; much more may the gospel so do. But whatever effects are hereby produced, they are wrought by the power of God exerted in the dispensation of the word. They are not educed out of the natural faculties of the minds of men, but are effects of the power of God in them and upon them. For we know that 'in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing;' and all unregenerate men are no more; for that which is 'born of the flesh is flesh.'

3. The actings thus effected and produced in men unregenerate, are neither *fruits* of, nor *dispositions* unto, spiritual life. Men that are spiritually dead, may have designs and desires to free themselves from dying eternally; but such a desire to be saved, is no saving disposition unto life.