

THE
MANNER OF CONVERSION
EXPLAINED IN
THE INSTANCE OF AUGUSTINE.

CHAP. VI.

The outward means and manner of conversion to God, or regeneration, with the degrees of spiritual operations on the minds of men and their effects, exemplified in the conversion of Augustine, as the account is given thereof by himself.

As among all the doctrines of the gospel, there is none opposed with more violence and subtilty, than that concerning our regeneration by the immediate, powerful, effectual, operation of the Holy Spirit of grace; so there is not scarce any thing more despised or scorned by many in the world, than that any should profess that there hath been such a work of God upon themselves, or on any occasion declare aught of the way and manner whereby it was wrought. The very mentioning hereof is grown a derision among some that call themselves Christians; and to plead an interest or concern in this grace, is to forfeit all a man's reputation with many who would be thought wise, and boast themselves to be rational. Neither is this a practice taken up of late in these declining times of the world; but seems to have been started and followed from days of old, possibly from the beginning; yea the enmity of Cain against Abel was but a branch of this proud and perverse inclination. The instance of Ishmael in the Scripture, is representative of all such as under an outward profession of the true religion, did or do scoff at those who, being as Isaac children of the promise, do profess and evidence an interest in the internal power of it, which they are unacquainted withal. And the same practice may be traced in succeeding ages. Hence, holy Austin entering upon the confession of his greater sins, designing thereby to magnify the glory and efficacy of the grace of God in his conversion,

provides against this scorn of men, which he knew he should meet withal. 'Rideant,' saith he, 'me arrogantes et nondum salubriter prostrati et elisi per te Deus meus, ego tamen confiteor tibi dedecora mea, in laude tua.' Confess. lib. 4. cap. 1. 'Let arrogant men deride or scorn me, who were never savingly cast down nor broken in pieces by thee my God, yet I will confess my own shame unto thy praise.' Let none be offended with these expressions of being 'savingly or wholesomely cast down and broken of God;' for in the judgment of this great person they are not fanatical. We may not therefore think it strange, if the same truth, the same practice, and profession of it, do still meet with the same entertainment. Let them deride and scorn it, who were never humbled savingly, nor broken with a sense of sin, nor relieved by grace; the holy work of God's Spirit is to be owned, and the truth to be avowed as it is in Jesus.

Of the original depravation of our nature, we have treated so far as is needful unto our present purpose. Yet some things must yet be added concerning the effects of that depravation, which will conduce unto the right understanding of the way and manner, whereby the Spirit of God proceedeth for the healing and removal of it, which we have now under especial consideration. And we may observe,

First, That the corrupt principle of sin, the native habitual inclination that is in us unto evil, worketh early in our natures, and for the most part preventeth all the actings of grace in us. Though some may be sanctified in or from the womb, yet in order of nature, this native corruption hath first place in them; for a clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean, but 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh.' Psal. lviii. 3. 'The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.' It is to no purpose to say that he speaks of wicked men; that is, such who are habitually and profligately so. For whatever any man may afterward run into by a course of sin, all men are morally alike from the womb, and it is an aggravation of the wickedness of men, that it begins so early and holds on an uninterrupted course. Children are not able to speak from the womb, as soon as they are born. Yet here are they said to speak lies. It is, therefore, the perverse acting of depraved nature in infancy that is intended. For

every thing that is irregular, that answers not the law of our creation and rule of our obedience, is a lie. And among the many instances collected by Austin of such irregular actings of nature in its infant state, one is peculiarly remarkable. Confess. lib. 1. cap. 6. ‘*Paulatim sentiebam ubi essem; et voluntates meas volebam ostendere eis per quos implerentur, et non poteram: itaque jactabam membra, et voces signa similia voluntatibus meis, pauca quæ poteram et qualia poteram; et cum mihi non obtemperabatur, vel non intelligendo, vel ne obsesset, indignabar non subditis majoribus, et liberis non servientibus, et me de illis flendo vindicabam.*’ This again he repeats, cap. 7. ‘*An pro tempore illo bona erant, flendo petere etiam quod noxie daretur, indignari acriter non subjectis hominibus liberis, et majoribus; hisque a quibus genitus est, multisque præterea prudentioribus, non ad nutum voluntatis obtemperantibus, feriendo nocere mihi quantum potest, quia non obeditur imperiis quibus perniciose obediretur? Ita imbecillitas membrorum infantilium innocens est, non animus infantium.*’ Those irregular and perverse agitations of mind, and of the will or appetite, not yet under the conduct of reason, which appear in infants, with the indignation and little self-revenge wherewith they are accompanied in their disappointments, when all about them do not subject themselves unto their inclinations, it may be to their hurt, are from the obliquity of our nature and effects of that depraved habit of sin, wherewith it is wholly possessed. And by the frequency of these lesser actings, are the mind and will prepared for those more violent and impetuous motions, which, by the improving of their natural capacities, and the incitation of new objects presented unto their corruptions they are exposed unto and filled withal. God did not originally thus create our nature, a condition worse and inferior unto that of other creatures; in whose young ones there are none of these disorders, but a regular compliance with their natural instinct prevails in them. And as the dying of multitudes of infants, notwithstanding the utmost care for their preservation, whereas the young ones of other creatures all generally live, if they have whereby their nature may be sustained, argues the imputation of sin unto them. ‘For death entered by sin, and passed upon all, inasmuch as all have

sinned;’ so those irregular actings peculiar unto them, prove sin inherent in them, or the corruption of their nature from their conceptions.

Secondly, With the increase of our natural faculties, and the strengthening of the members of our bodies, which by nature are ‘ become ready instruments of unrighteousness unto sin,’ Rom. v. 13. this perverse principle acts itself with more evidence, frequency, and success in the production of actual sin, or inordinate actings of the mind, will, and affections. So the wise man tells us, that ‘ childhood and youth are vanity;’ Eccles. xi. 10. The mind of man, in the state of childhood and youth, puts itself forth in all kinds of vain actings, in foolish imaginations, perverse and froward appetites, falseness in words, with sensible effects of corrupt inclinations in every kind. Austin’s first book of Confessions is an excellent comment on that text wherein the ‘ vanity of childhood and youth,’ are graphically described; with pathetical self-reflecting complaints concerning the guilt of sin, which is contracted in them. Some, perhaps, may think light of those ways of folly and vanity, wherein childhood doth, or left alone would, consume itself; that there is no moral evil in those childish innocencies. That good man was of another mind. ‘ Istane est,’ saith he, ‘ innocentia puerilis? non est Domine, non est oro te Deus meus, nam hæc ipsa sunt quæ a pædagogis et magistris, a nucibus pitulis, passeribus, ad prefectos et reges, aurum, prædia, mancipia hæc ipsa omnino quæ succedentibus majoribus ætatibus transeunt.’ Lib. 1. cap. 19. This is not innocency, it is not so. The same principle and habit of mind, carried over unto riper age, and greater occasions, bring forth those greater sins, which the lives of men are filled withal in this world. And who is there who hath a serious reverence of God, with any due apprehension of his holiness, and a clear conviction of the nature of sin, who is not able to call over such actings in childhood, which most think meet to connive at, wherein they may remember that perversity whereof they are now ashamed. By this means is the heart prepared for a farther obduration in sin, by the confirmation of native obstinacy.

Thirdly, Unto those more general irregularities, *actual sins* do succeed, such, I mean, as are against the remaining

light of nature, or committed in rebellion unto the dictates and guidance of our minds and consciences, the influence of those intelligences of moral good and evil, which are inseparable from the faculties of our souls. For although in some, they may be stifled and overborne, yet can they never be utterly obliterated or extinguished, but will accompany the nature of man unto eternity, even in that condition, wherein they shall be of no other use, but to add to, and increase its misery. Amongst those, we may call over one or two instances. Lying is such a sin, which the depravation of nature in youth is prone to exert itself by, and that on sundry reasons not now to be inquired into: 'they go astray from the womb speaking lies.' The first inducement of our nature unto sin, was by a lie; and we fell in Adam by giving credit thereunto. And there is in every sin, a particular lie. But speaking falsely, contrary unto what they know to be true, is that which children are prone unto; though some more than others, according as other vicious habits prevail in them, whose actings they foolishly think to thatch over and cover thereby. This that holy person whom we instance in, acknowledgeth and bewaileth in himself; '*Non videbam voraginem turpitudinis in quam projectus eram ab oculis tuis; nam in illis quid jam me turpius fuit, fallendo innumerabilibus mendaciis, et pædagogum et magistros et parentes amore ludendi, et studio spectandi nugatoria.*' Lib. 1. cap. 19. 'I saw not (O God) into what a gulf of filth I was cast out from before thee; for what was more filthy than I, whilst out of love of plays, and desire of looking after vanities, I deceived teachers and parents with innumerable lies.' And this the good man was afterward exceedingly humbled for, and from it learned much of the vileness of his own nature. And we find by experience, that a sense of this sin oft-times accompanies the first real convictions that befall the souls of men. For when they seriously reflect upon themselves, or do view themselves in the glass of the law, they are not only sensible of the nature of this sin, but also how much they indulged themselves therein, partly, whilst they remember how on the least occasions they were surprised into it, which yet they neglected to watch against; and, partly, understanding how sometimes they made it their business by premeditated falsehoods, so to cover other sins,

as to escape rebuke and correction. The mention of these things, will probably be entertained with contempt and scorn in this age, wherein the most prodigious wickednesses of men are made but a sport; but God, his holiness, and his truth, are still the same, whatever alterations there may be in the world. And the holy psalmist seems to have some reflection on this vice of youth, when he prays, that ‘God would take from him the way of lying.’ Of the same nature are those lesser thefts, in despoiling their parents and governors of such things which they are not allowed to take, and make use of for themselves. ‘They rob their father or mother, and say it is no transgression;’ Prov. xxviii. 24. So saith the same person, ‘*Furta etiam faciebam de cellario parentum et de mensis vel gula impuritante, vel ut haberem quod darem pueris ludum suum mihi quo pariter delectabantur tamen vendentibus.*’ He sometimes stole from his parents, either to gratify his own sensual appetite, or to give unto his companions. In such instances doth original pravity exert itself in youth or childhood, and thereby both increase its own power, and fortify the mind and the affections against the light and efficacy of conviction.

Fourthly, As men grow up in the state of nature, sin gets ground in them, and upon them *subjectively* and *objectively*. Concupiscence gets strength with age, and grows in violence, as persons arrive to ability for its exercise; the instruments of it in the faculties of the soul, organs of the senses, and members of the body, growing every day more serviceable unto it, and more apt to receive impressions from it, or to comply with its motions. Hence, some charge the sins of youth on the heat of blood, and the restlessness of the animal spirits, which prompt men unto irregularities and extravagancies. But these are only *vehicula concupiscentiæ*, things which it makes use of, to exert its poison by. For sin turns every thing in this state unto its own advantage, and abuseth even the commandment itself, to ‘work in us all manner of concupiscence;’ Rom. vii. 8. Again, the objects of lust by the occasions of life, are now multiplied. Temptations increase with years, and the businesses of the world; but, especially, by that corruption of conversation which is among the most. Hence, sundry persons are in this part of their youth, one way or other, overtaken with

some gross actual sin or sins. That all are not so, is a mere effect of preventing grace, and not at all from themselves. This the apostle respects in his charge; 2 Tim. ii. 22. 'Flee youthful lusts;' such lusts as work effectually, and prevail mightily, in those that are young, if not subdued by the grace of God. And David in a sense and from experience hereof, prays, that God would 'not remember the sins of his youth;' Psal. xxv. 7. And a reflection from them, is sometimes the torment of age; Job xx. 11. So he in whom we have chosen to exemplify the instances of such a course. He humbly confesseth unto God, his falling into, and being overtaken with, great sins, such as fornication and uncleanness in his younger days, in the mire whereof he was long detained. To this purpose he discourseth at large, lib. 2. cap. 1—3. And of the reason of this his humble and public acknowledgments, he gives this holy account: '*Neque enim tibi Deus meus, sed apud te narro hæc generi meo, generi humano, quantulacunque ex particula incidere potest in istas meas literas. Et ad quid hoc? ut videlicet ego et quisquis hæc legit cogitemus de quam profundo, clamandum sit ad te.*' Cap. 3. 'I declare these things, O my God, not unto thee, but before thee, or in thy presence, unto my own race, unto human kind, whatever portion thereof, may fall on these writings of mine.' And unto what end? Namely, that 'I and every one, who shall read these things, may consider, out of what great depths we are to cry unto thee.' So he, who lived not to see the days wherein humble confession of sin was made a matter of contempt and scorn.

Now there is commonly a twofold event of men's falling under the power of temptations, and thereby into great actual sins.

1. God sometimes takes occasion from them to awaken their consciences unto a deep sense not only of that sin in particular, whose guilt they have contracted, but of their other sins also. The great physician of their souls turns this poison into a medicine; and makes that wound which they have given themselves, to be the lancing of a festered sore. For whereas their oscitancy, prejudices, and custom of sinning, have taken away the sense of lesser sins, and secure them from reflections from them; the stroke on their consciences from those greater provocations pierceth so deep, as that

they are forced to entertain thoughts of looking out after a release or remedy. So did they of old at the sermon of Peter, when he charged them with the guilt of a consent to the crucifying of Jesus Christ; they were 'pricked to the heart, and cried out, Men and brethren what shall we do;' Acts ii. 36, 37.

2. With others it proves a violent entrance into a farther pursuit of sin. The bounds of restraints, with the influence of natural light, being broken up and rejected, men's lusts being let loose do break through all remaining obstacles, and run out into the greatest compass of excess and riot; observing no present evil to ensue on what they have done according to their first fears, they are imboldened to greater wickedness; Eccles. viii. 11. And by this means is their conversion unto God rendered more difficult, and men thus wander away more and more from him unto the greatest distance that is recoverable by grace. For,

Fifthly, A course in, and a custom of, sinning with many ensues hereon. Such the apostle treats concerning; Eph. iv. 18, 19. 'Being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.' Custom of sinning takes away the sense of it; the course of the world takes away the shame of it; and love to it makes men greedy in the pursuit of it; see Confess. lib. 2. cap. 6. And this last effect of sin, as incited, provoked, and assisted, by temptations, hath great variety in the effects and degrees of it. Hence are the various courses of unhumiliated sinners in the world, wherein the outrage and excess of some seems to justify others in their more sedate irregularities, and less conspicuous provocations. Yea, some who are not in any better state and condition as to their interest in the covenant of God than others, will yet not only startle at, but really abhor, those outrages of sin and wickedness which they fall unto: now this difference ariseth not from hence that the nature of all men is not equally corrupt and depraved, but that God is pleased to make his restraining grace effectual towards some, to keep them within those bounds of sinning which they shall not pass over, and to permit others so to fall under a conjunction of their lusts and temptations as that they proceed unto all manner of evil. Moreover there are peculiar inclinations unto some sins, if not inlaid in, yet

much enhanced and made obnoxious unto incitations by the temperature of the body. And some are more exposed unto temptations in the world from their outward circumstances and occasions of life. Hereby are some even precipitated to all manner of evil. But still the 'old man which is corrupt according unto deceitful lusts,' is the same naturally in all. All difference as to good from evil, I mean not as to the nature of the things themselves, but as to men's interest in them, so as to adhere to the one and avoid the other, is from the will of God. Thus he secretly prepares for some a better temperature of nature, docile and pliable unto such notices of things as may entertain their minds, and satisfy them above-sensual delights. And some he disposeth in their education, callings, societies, aims, and designs, in the world, into ways inconsistent with open lewdness, which will much balance their inclinations, besides his secret internal actings on their hearts and minds, whereof afterward. This is excellently expressed by Austin, Confess. lib. 2. cap. 7. '*Diligam te Domine, et gratias agam, et confitear nomini tuo, quoniam tanta dimisisti mihi mala et nefaria opera mea. Gratia tuae deputo et misericordia tuae, quod peccata mea tanquam glaciem solvesti; gratia tuae deputo et quaecunque non feci mala. Quid enim non facere potui qui etiam gratuitum amavi facinus? et omnia mihi dimissa esse fateor, et quae mea sponte feci mala et quae te duce non feci. Quis est hominum qui suam cogitans infirmitatem, audet viribus suis tribuere castitatem atque innocentiam suam, ut minus amet te, quasi minus necessaria fuerit misericordia tua, quâ condonas peccata conversis ad te? Qui enim vocatus ad te secutus est vocem tuam, et vitavit ea quae me de meipso recordantem et fatentem legit, non me derideat, ab eo medico ægrum sanari a quo prestitum est ut non ægrotaret, vel potius ut minus ægrotaret. Et ideo te tantundem imo vero amplius diligat, quia per quem me videt tantis peccatorum meorum languoribus exui, per eum se videt tantis peccatorum languoribus non implicari.*' 'I will love thee, O God, and thank thee, and confess unto thy name, because thou hast forgiven me my evil and nefarious deeds. I impute it to thy grace and mercy, that thou hast made my sins to melt away as ice, and I impute it to thy grace as to all the evils which I have not done. For what could not I have done, who loved wickedness for itself?

All I acknowledge are forgiven me, both the evils that I have done on my own accord, and what through thy guidance I have not done. Who is there who considering his own weakness, dare ascribe his chastity or innocency unto his own strength, that he may less love thee, as though thy mercy were less necessary unto him, whereby thou forgivest the sins of them that are converted to thee. For let not him who being called of thee, and having heard thy voice, hath avoided the evils which I have confessed, deride me that being sick was healed of that physician, from whom he received the mercy not to be sick, or not to be so sick.'

This brief account of the actings of corrupted nature, until it comes unto the utmost of a recoverable alienation from God, may somewhat illustrate and set off the work of his grace towards us. And thus far, whatever habit be contracted in a course of sin, yet the state of men is absolutely recoverable, by the grace of Jesus Christ administered in the gospel; 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. No state of sin is absolutely unhealable, until God hath variously dealt with men by his Spirit. His word must be rejected, and he must be sinned against in a peculiar manner, before remission be impossible. All sins and blasphemies antecedent thereunto, may be forgiven unto men, and that before their conversion unto God; Matt. xii. 31, 32. Luke xii. 10. Wherefore the *manner* and *degrees* of the operations of this Spirit of God on the minds of men, towards and in their conversion, is that which we shall now inquire into, reducing what we have to offer concerning it unto certain heads or instances.

First, Under the ashes of our collapsed nature, there are yet remaining certain sparks of *celestial fire*, consisting in inbred notices of good and evil, of rewards and punishments, of the presence and all-seeing eye of God, of help and assistance to be had from him, with a dread of his excellencies where any thing is apprehended unworthy of him, or provoking unto him. And where there are any means of instruction from supernatural revelation by the word preached, or the care of parents in private, there they are insensibly improved and increased. Hereby, men do obtain an objective distinct knowledge of what they had subjectively and radically, though very imperfectly, before. These notices, therefore, God oftentimes excites and quickens even in them

that are young, so that they shall work in them some real regard of, and applications unto, him. And those great workings about the things of God, and towards him, which are sometimes found in children, are not mere effects of nature. For that would not so act itself, were it not, by one occasion or other for that end administered by the providence of God, effectually excited. And many can call over such divine visitations in their youth, which now they understand to be so. To this purpose speaks the person mentioned; ‘Puer cœpi rogare te auxilium et refugium meum, et in tuam invocationem rumpebam nodos linguæ meæ, et rogavi parvus non parvo affectu, ne in schola vapularem.’ He prayed earnestly to God as a refuge, when he was afraid to be beat at school. And this he resolves into instruction, or what he had observed in others. ‘Invenimus homines rogantes te, et didicimus ab eis, sentientes te ut poteramus esse magnum aliquem qui posset etiam non apparens sensibus nostris, exaudire nos et subvenire vobis;’ lib. 1. cap. 9. And hereunto he adds some general instruction which he had from the word, cap. 11. And from the same principles, when he was a little after surprised with a fit of sickness, he cried out with all earnestness that he might be baptized; that so he might, as he thought, go to heaven; for his father was not yet a Christian, whence he was not baptized in his infancy. ‘Vidisti Domine cum adhuc puer essem, et quodam die pressus stomachi dolore repente æstuarem pene moriturus, vidisti Deus meus, quoniam custos meus jam eras quo motu animi et qua fide baptismum Christi tui, Dei et Domini mei flagitavi;’ cap. 11. Such affections and occasional actings of soul towards God, are wrought in many by the Spirit. With the most they wear off and perish, as they did with him, who after this cast himself into many flagitious sins. But in some, God doth in and by the use of these means, inlay their hearts with those seeds of faith and grace which he gradually cherisheth and increaseth.

Secondly, God works upon men by his Spirit in outward means, to cause them to take some real and *steady consideration of him*, their own distance from him, and obnoxiousness unto his righteousness on the account of sin. It is almost incredible to apprehend, but that it is testified unto by daily experience, how men will live even where the word is read

and preached ; how they will get a form of speaking of God, yea, and of performing some duties of religion, and yet never come to have any steady thoughts of God, or of their relation to him, or of their concernment in his will. Whatever they speak of God, he ‘is not in all their thoughts ;’ Psal. x. 4. Whatever they do in religion, they do it not unto him ; Amos v. 25. They have ‘neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape ;’ John v. 37. knowing nothing ‘for themselves,’ which is their duty ; Job v. 27. And yet it is hard to convince them that such is their condition. But when God is pleased to carry on his work of light and grace in them, they can call to mind, and understand how it was with them in their former darkness. Then will they acknowledge, that in truth they never had serious steady thoughts of God, but only such as were occasional and transient. Wherefore God begins here with them, and thereby to subduct them from under the absolute power of the vanity of their minds. By one means or other he fixeth in them steady thoughts concerning himself, and their relation unto him. And there are several ways which he proceedeth in for the effecting hereof. As,

1. By some sudden *amazing judgments*, whereby he ‘revealeth his wrath from heaven against the ungodliness of men ;’ Rom. i. 18. So Waldo was affected when his companion was stricken dead as he walked with him in the fields ; which proved the occasion of his conversion unto God. So the Psalmist describes the affections and thoughts of men, when they are surprised with a storm at sea ; Psal. cvii. 25—28. An instance whereof we have in the mariners of Jonah’s ship ; chap. i. 5—7. And that Pharaoh who despised one day, saying, ‘Who is the Lord that I should regard him ?’ Being the next day terrified with thunder and lightning, cries out, ‘Entreat the Lord for me, that it may be so no more ;’ Exod. ix. 28. And such like impressions from divine power, most men, at one time or other, have experience of.

2. By *personal afflictions* ; J ob xxxiii. 19, 20. Psal. lxxviii. 34, 35. Hos. v. 15. Affliction naturally speaks anger, and anger respects sin. It bespeaks itself to be God’s messenger to call sin to remembrance ; 1 Kings xvii. 8. Gen. xlii. 21, 22. The time of affliction is a time of consideration ; Eccles. vii. 14. And if men be not obdurate and hardened

almost unto practical atheism by a course of sinning, they cannot but bethink themselves who sends affliction, and for what end it is sent. Hence great thoughts of the holiness of God, and of his hatred of sin, with some sense of men's own guilt and especial crimes will arise. And these effects many times prove preparatory and materially dispositive unto conversion. And not what these things are in themselves able to operate is to be considered, but what they are designed unto, and made effectual for, by the Holy Ghost.

3. By *remarkable deliverances* and mercies; so it was with Naaman the Syrian; 2 Kings ii. 15—17. Sudden changes from great dangers and distresses by unexpected reliefs, deeply affect the minds of men, convincing them of the power, presence, and goodness of God. And this produceth a sense and acknowledgment of their own unworthiness of what they have received. Hence also some temporary effects of submission to the divine will and gratitude do proceed.

4. An observation of the *conversation* of others, hath affected many to seek into the causes and ends of it. And this inclines them unto imitation; 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

5. The *word*, in the reading or preaching of it, is the principal means hereof. This the Holy Spirit employeth and maketh use of in his entrance into this work; 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. For those convictions befall not men from the word universally or promiscuously, but as the Holy Spirit willeth and designeth. It is by the law that men have the knowledge of sin; Rom. vii. 7. Yet we see by experience, that the doctrine of the law is despised by the most that hear it. Wherefore, it hath not in itself a force or virtue always to work conviction of sin in them unto whom it is outwardly proposed. Only towards some the Spirit of God is pleased to put forth an especial energy in the dispensation thereof.

By these, and the like means, doth God oft-times put the *wildness* of corrupted nature unto a stand, and stirs up the faculties of the soul by an effectual, though not saving, impression upon them, seriously to consider of itself, and its relation unto him and his will. And hereby are men oft-times incited and engaged unto many duties of religion, as prayer for the pardon of sin, with resolutions of amendment; and although these things in some are subordinated unto a farther and more effectual work of the Spirit of God upon

them, yet with many they prove evanid and fading, their goodness in them being as a 'morning cloud, or as the early dew which passeth away;' Hos. vi. 4. And the reasons whence it is that men cast off these warnings of God, and pursue not their own intentions under them, nor answer what they lead unto, are obvious. For,

(1.) The darkness of their minds being yet uncured, they are not able to discern the true nature of these divine intimations and instructions, but after a while regard them not, or reject them as the occasions of needless scruples and fears. (2.) Presumption of their present condition, that it is as good as it need be, or as is convenient in their present circumstances and occasions, makes them neglect the improvement of their warnings. (3.) Profane societies and relations, such as, it may be, scoff at and deride all tremblings at divine warnings, with ignorant ministers that undertake to teach what they have not learned, are great means of hardening men in their sins, and of forfeiting the benefit of these divine intimations. (4.) They will, as to all efficacy, and the motions they bring on the affections of men, decay and expire of themselves, if they are not diligently improved. Wherefore in many they perish through mere sloth and negligence. (5.) Satan applies all his engines to the defeatment of these beginnings of any good in the souls of men. (6.) That which effectually and utterly overthrows this work, which causeth them to cast off these heavenly warnings, is mere love of lusts and pleasures, or the unconquered adherence of a corrupted heart unto sensual and sinful objects, that offer present satisfaction unto its carnal desires. By this means is this work of the Spirit of God in the hearts and minds of many utterly defeated, to the increase of their guilt, an addition to their natural hardness, and the ruin of their souls. But in some of them he is graciously pleased to renew his work, and by more effectual means to carry it on to perfection, as shall be afterward declared.

Now there is scarce any of these instances of the care and watchfulness of God over the souls of men, whom he designs either to convince or convert for the ends of his own glory, but the holy person whom we have proposed as an example, gives an account of them in, and towards himself, declaring in like manner how by the ways and means

mentioned they were frustrate and came to nothing. Such were the warnings, which he acknowledged that God gave him by the persuasions and exhortations of his mother; lib. 2. cap. 3. Such were those which he had in sicknesses of his own, and in the death of his dear friend and companion; lib. 4. cap. 5—7. And in all the several warnings he had from God, he chargeth the want and guilt of their non-improvement on his natural blindness, his mind being not illuminated, and the corruption of his nature not yet cured, with the efficacy of evil society, and the course of the world in the places where he lived. But it would be tedious to transcribe the particular accounts that he gives of these things, though all of them singularly worthy of consideration. For I must say, that in my judgment there is none among the ancient or modern divines unto this day, who either in the declarations of their own experiences, or their directions unto others, have equalled, much less out-gone him, in an accurate search and observation of all the secret actings of the Spirit of God on the minds and souls of men, both towards and in their recovery or conversion. And in order hereunto, scarce any one not divinely inspired, hath so traced the way of the serpent, or the effectual working of original sin in and on the hearts of men, with the efficacy communicated thereunto, by various temptations and occasions of life in this world. The ways also, whereby the deceitfulness of sin in compliance with objective temptations, doth seek to elude and frustrate the work of God's grace when it begins to attempt the strong-holds of sin in the heart, were exceedingly discovered unto him. Neither hath any man more lively and expressly laid open the power of effectual and victorious grace, with the manner of its operation and prevalency. And all these things by the guidance of the good Spirit of God, and attendance unto the word, did he exemplify from his own experience in the whole work of God towards him. Only it must be acknowledged, that he declareth these things in such a way and manner, as also with such expressions, as many in our days would cry out on as fulsome and fanatical.

Secondly, In the way of calling men unto the saving knowledge of God, the Holy Spirit *convinceth them of sin*; or he brings them under the power of a *work of conviction*.

It is not my design, nor here in my way, to handle the nature of the work of conviction, the means, causes, and effects of it. Besides, it hath been done at large by others. It is sufficient unto my purpose; 1. To shew the nature of it in general. 2. The causes of it. 3. The ways whereby men lose their convictions, and so become more and more hardened in sin. 4. How the Holy Spirit doth carry on the work in some unto complete conversion unto God.

1. For the nature of it in general; it consists in a *fixing* the vain mind of a sinner upon a due consideration of sin, its nature, tendency, and end, with his own concernment therein; and a *fixing* of a due sense of sin upon the secure mind of the sinner, with suitable affections unto its apprehensions. The warnings before insisted on, whereby God excites men to some steady notices of him and themselves, are like calls given unto a man in a profound sleep, whereat being startled he lifts up himself for a little space, but oppressed with the power of his deep slumber, quickly lays him down again, as Austin expresseth it. But this work of conviction abides with men, and they are no way able speedily to disentangle themselves from it.

Now the *mind* of man, which is the subject of this work of conviction, hath two things distinctly to be considered in it. 1. The *understanding*, which is the *active, noetical, or contemplative* power and faculty of it. 2. The *affections*, wherein its passive and sensitive power doth consist. With respect hereunto there are two parts of the work of conviction. (1.) The *fixing* of the mind, the rational contemplative power of it, upon a due consideration of sin. (2.) The *fixing* of a due sense of sin on the *practical, passive, sensible* part of the mind, that is, the *conscience and affections*, as was said before.

(1.) It is a great work to fix the vain mind of an unregenerate sinner on a due consideration of sin, its nature, and tendency. The darkness of their own mind and inexpressible vanity, wherein I place the principal effect of our apostacy from God, do disenable, hinder, and divert them from such apprehensions. Hence God so often complains of the foolishness of the people that they would not consider, that they would not be wise to consider their latter end. We find by experience this folly and vanity in many unto an astonishment. No reasons, arguments, entreaties, by all that

is naturally dear to them, no necessities can prevail with them to fix their minds on a due consideration of sin: moreover, Satan now employs all his engines to beat off the efficacy and power of this work. And when his temptations and delusions are mixed with men's natural darkness and vanity, the mind seems to be impreguably fortified against the power of conviction. For although it be real conversion unto God, that overthrows the kingdom of Satan in us; yet this work of conviction raiseth such a combustion in it, that he cannot but fear it will be its end. And this strong man armed, would if possible keep his goods and house in peace. Hence all sorts of persons have daily experience in their children, servants, relations, how difficult, yea, how impossible, it is to fix their minds on a due consideration of sin, until it be wrought in them by the exceeding greatness of the power of the Spirit of God. Wherefore, herein consists the first part of this work of conviction; it fixeth the mind on a due consideration of sin. So it is expressed, Psal. li. 3. 'my sin is ever before me.' God reproves men, and 'sets their sins in order' before their eyes; Psal. l. 21. Hence they are necessitated, as it were, always to behold them, and that which way soever they turn themselves. Fain they would cast them behind their backs, or cast out thoughts of them, but the arrows of God stick in them, and they cannot take off their minds from their consideration. And whereas there are three things in sin; (1.) The original of it and its native inheritance in us, as Psal. li. 5. (2.) The state of it, or the obnoxiousness of men to the wrath of God on the account thereof; Eph. ii. 1—3. (3.) The particular sins of men's lives:—in the first part of the work of conviction the minds of men are variously exercised with respect unto them, according as the Spirit of God is pleased to engage and fix them.

(2.) As the mind is hereby fixed on the consideration of sin, so a sense of sin must also be fixed on the mind, that is, the conscience and affections. A bare contemplation of the concernments of sin is of little use in this matter. The Scripture principally evidenceth this work of conviction, or placeth it in this effect of a sense of sin, in trouble, sorrow, disquietment of mind, fear of ruin, and the like; see Acts ii. 37. xxiv. 25. But this I must not enlarge upon.

2. This therefore is the second thing which we observe in God's gracious actings towards the recovery of the souls of men from their *apostacy*, and from under the power of sin. The principal efficient cause of this work is the Holy Ghost; the preaching of the word, especially of the law, being the instrument which he maketh use of therein. The knowledge of sin is by the law, both the nature, guilt, and curse belonging to it; Rom. vii. 7. There is therefore no conviction of sin, but what consists in an emanation of light and knowledge from the doctrine of the law, with an evidence of its power and a sense of its curse. Other means, as afflictions, dangers, sicknesses, fears, disappointments, may be made use of to excite, stir up, and put an edge upon, the minds and affections of men; yet it is by one means or other from the law of God, that such a discovery is made of sin unto them, and such a sense of it wrought upon them, as belongs unto this work of conviction. But it is the Spirit of God alone that is the principal efficient cause of it, or he works these effects on the minds of men. God takes it upon himself as his own work to reprove men and set their sins in order before their eyes; Psal. l. 21. And that this same work is done immediately by the Spirit is expressly declared, John xvi. 8. He alone it is who makes all means effectual unto this end and purpose. Without his especial and immediate actings on us to this end, we may hear the law preached all the days of our lives and not be once affected with it.

And it may by the way be worth our observation, to consider how God, designing the calling or conversion of the souls of men, doth in this holy, wise providence overrule all their outward concernments, so as that they shall be disposed into such circumstances, as conduce to the end aimed at. Either by their own inclinations and choice, or by the intervention of accidents crossing their inclinations, and frustrating their designs, he will lead them into such societies, acquaintances, relations, places, means, as he hath ordained to be useful unto them for the great ends of their conviction and conversion. So in particular, Austin aboundeth in his contemplation on the holy, wise providence of God, in carrying of him from Carthage to Rome, and from thence to Milan, where he heard Ambrose preach every Lord's day,

which proved at length the means of his thorough conversion to God. And in that whole course, by his discourse upon it, he discovers excellently, as on the one hand, the variety of his own projects and designs, his aims and ends, which oft-times were perverse and froward; so on the other, the constant guidance of divine providence, working powerfully through all occurrences towards the blessed end designed for him. And I no way doubt, but that God exercised him unto those distinct experiences of sin and grace in his own heart and ways, because he had designed him to be the great champion of the doctrine of his grace against all its enemies, and that not only in his own age, wherein it met with a fierce opposition, but also in all succeeding ages, by his excellent labours preserved for the use of the church: see Confess. lib. 5. cap. 7—9, &c. ‘Tu spes mea in terra viventium, ad mutandum terrarum locum pro salute animæ mea, et Carthagini stimulos quibus inde avellerer admovebas; et Romæ illecebras quibus attraherer proponebas mihi per homines qui diligebant vitam mortuam, hinc insana facientes inde vana pollicentes; et ad corrigendos gressus meos utebaris occulte et illorum et mea perversitate;’ cap. 8. ‘Thou who art my hope in the land of the living, that I might remove from one country to another, for the salvation of my soul, didst both apply goads unto me at Carthage, whereby I might be driven from thence, and proposedst allurements unto me at Rome, whereby I might be drawn thither; and this thou didst by men who loved the dead life in sin; here doing things outrageous, there promising things desirable to vain minds, whilst thou, to correct and reform my ways, didst secretly make use of their frowardness and mine.’

3. It must be granted that many, on whom this work hath been wrought, producing great resolutions of amendment, and much reformation of life, do lose all the *power* and *efficacy* of it, with all the impressions it had made on their affections. And some of these wax worse and more profligate in sinning than ever they were before. For having broken down the dam of their restraints, they pour out their lusts like a flood, and are more senseless than ever of those checks and fears with which before they were bridled and awed; 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. So the person lately mentioned declares, that after many convictions which he had digested and neglected, he

was grown so obdurate and senseless, that falling into a fever, wherein he thought he should die and go immediately unto hell, he had not that endeavour after deliverance and mercy as he had many years before on lesser dangers. And this perverse effect is variously brought about.

(1.) It is with most an immediate product of the power of their own lust. Especially is it so with them who together with their convictions receive no gifts of the Holy Ghost. For, as we observed, their lusts being only checked and controlled, not subdued, they get new strength by their restraint, and rebel with success against conviction. Such as these fall away from what they have attained suddenly; Matt. xiii. 5. 21. One day they seem to lie in hell by the terror of their convictions, and the next to be hasting towards it by their sins and pollutions; see Luke xi. 24—26. Hos. iv. 6. vi. 4.

(2.) This apostacy is promoted and hastened by others. As, [1.] such as undertaking to be spiritual guides and instructors of men in their way towards rest, who, being unskilful in the word of righteousness, do heal their wounds slightly, or turn them out of the way. Seducers also, it may be, interpose their crafty deceits, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and so turn men off from those good ways of God whereinto they would otherwise enter. So it fell out with Austin, who beginning somewhat to inquire after God, fell into the society and heresy of the Manichees, which frustrated all the convictions which by any means he had received. [2.] Such as directly, and that perhaps with importunity and violence, will endeavour to draw men back into the ways of the world, and the pursuit of their lusts; Prov. i. 11—14. So the same person declares with what earnestness and restless importunities some of his companions endeavoured to draw him unto the spectacles and plays at Rome. And it is not easily imagined with what subtilty some persons will entice others into sinful courses, nor what violence they will use in their temptations under a pretence of love and friendship. [3.] The awe that is put on the minds of men in their convictions, arising from a dread of the terror of the law, and the judgments of God threatened therein, is apt of itself to wear off when the soul is a little accustomed unto it, and yet sees no evil actually to ensue; Eccles. viii. 11. 2 Pet. i. 4.

4. In some the Holy Spirit of God is pleased to *carry on this work of conviction* towards a farther blessed issue, and then two things ensue thereon in the minds of them who are so convinced.

First, There will follow great and strange conflicts between their corruptions and their convictions. And this doth especially manifest itself in them who have been accustomed unto a course of sinning, or have any particular sin wherein they delight, and by which they have given satisfaction unto their lusts. For the law coming with power and terror on the conscience, requires a relinquishment of all sins, at the eternal peril of the soul. Sin hereby is incited and provoked^a, and the soul begins to see its disability to conflict with that, which before it thought absolutely in its own power. For men that indulge themselves in their sins doubt not but that they can leave them at their pleasure. But when they begin to make head against them on the command of the law, they find themselves to be in the power of that which they imagined to be in theirs. So doth sin take occasion by the commandment to work in men all manner of concupiscence; and those who thought themselves before to be alive, do find that it is sin which lives, and that themselves are dead; Rom. vii. 7—9. Sin rising up in rebellion against the law, discovers its own power, and the utter impotency of them in whom it is, to contest with it or destroy it: but yet men's convictions in this condition will discover themselves, and operate two ways or in a twofold degree.

1. They will produce some *endeavours* and promises of *amendment* and reformation of life. These men are unavoidably cast upon or wrought unto, to pacify the voice of the law in their consciences which bids them do so or perish. But such endeavours or promises for the most part hold only unto the next occasion of sinning, or temptation. An access of the least outward advantage or provocation unto the internal power of sin, slights all such resolutions, and the soul gives up itself unto the power of its old ruler. Such

^a Libera me Domine ab his hostibus meis a quibus me liberare non valeo. Per-versum et pessimum est cor meum, ad deploranda propria peccata mea est lapideum et aridum, ad resistendum insultantibus molle et luteum, ad inutilia et noxia pertractanda velox et infatigabile, ad cogitanda salubria fastidiosum et immobile. Anima mea distorta et depravata est ad percipiendum bonum; sed ad voluptatum vitia nimis facilis et prompta, ad salutem remiiscendam nimis etiam difficilis et pigra. De Contritione Cordis, inter opera August. cap. 4.

effects of the word are described, Hos. vi. 4. So Austin expresseth his own experience after his great convictions and before his full conversion; lib. 8. cap. 5. ‘*Suspirabam ligatus non ferro alieno, sed ferrea mea voluntate. Velle meum tenebat inimicus, et inde mihi catenam fecerat et constrinxerat me. Quippe ex voluntate perversa facta est libido, et dum servitur libidini, facta est consuetudo: et dum consuetudini non resistitur, facta est necessitas. Quibus quasi ansulis quibusdam sibimet innexis, unde catenam appellavi, tenebat me obstrictum dura servitus.*’ And he shews how faint and languid his endeavours were for reformation and amendment. ‘*Sarcina seculi velut somno assolet dulciter premebar, et cogitationes quibus meditabar in te, similes erant conatibus expergisci volentium, qui tamen superati soporis altitudine remerguntur.*’ And he confesseth, that although through the urgency of his convictions he could not but pray that he might be freed from the power of sin, yet through the prevalency of that power in him, he had a secret reserve and desire not to part with that sin which he prayed against: cap. 7. ‘*Petieram a te castitatem et dixeram da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo, timebam etiam ne me cito exaudires, et cito sanares a morbo concupiscentiæ, quam malebam expleri, quam extinguî.*’

2. These endeavours do arise unto great perplexities and distresses. For after a while, the soul of a sinner is torn and divided between the power of corruption, and the terror of conviction^b. And this falls out upon a double account. (1.) Upon some occasional sharpening of former convictions, when the sense of them hath been ready to wear off. (2.) From the secret insinuation of a principle of spiritual life and strength into the will, whose nature and power the soul is as yet unacquainted withal. Of both these we have signal instances in the person before mentioned; for after all the means which God had used towards him for his conversion, whilst yet he was detained under the power of sin, and

^b Vere Abyssus peccata mea sunt quia incomprehensibilia profunditate, et inestimabilia sunt numero et immensitate. O abyssus abyssum invocans! O peccata mea, tormenta quibus me servatis abyssus sunt, quia infinita et incomprehensibilia sunt. Est et tertia abyssus, et est nimis terribilis, judicia Dei abyssus multa, quia super omnem sensum occulta. Hæ omnes abyssi terribiles sunt mihi undique, quia timor super timorem et dolor super dolorem. Abyssus judiciorum Dei super me, abyssus inferni subtus me, abyssus peccatorum meorum est intra me. Illam quæ super me est timeo ne in me irruat; et me cum abyso mea, in illam quæ subtus me latet, obruat. Lib. de Contritione Cordis, inter opera August. cap. 9.

ready on every temptation to revert to his former courses, he occasionally heard one Politianus giving an account of the conversion of two eminent courtiers who immediately renounced the world, and betook themselves wholly to the service of God. This discourse God was pleased to make use of farther to awake him, and even to amaze him. Lib. 8. cap. 7. ‘Narrabat hoc Politianus; tu autem Domine inter verba ejus retorquebas me ad meipsum, auferens me a dorso meo ubi me posueram, dum nollem me attendere, et consulebas me ante faciem meam, ut viderem quam turpis essem, quam distortus et sordidus, maculosus et ulcerosus: et videbam, et horrebam, et quo a me fugerem non erat; et si conabar a me avertere aspectum, narrabat ille quod narrabat, et tu me (sursus) opponebas mihi, et imprimebas me in oculos meos, ut invenirem iniquitatem meam et odissem.’ And a little after, ‘Ita rodebar intus et confundebam pudore horribili vehementer, cum Politianus talia loqueretur.’ The substance of what he says is, that in and by that discourse of Politianus, God held him to the consideration of himself, caused him to see and behold his own filth and vileness, until he was horribly perplexed and confounded in himself. So it often falls out in this work of the Spirit of God. When his first warnings are not complied withal, when the light he communicates is not improved; upon the return of them they shall be mixed with some sense of severity.

This effect, I say, proceeds from hence, that under this work God is pleased secretly to communicate a *principle of grace* or spiritual life unto the will. This, therefore, being designed to rule and bear sway in the soul, begins its conflict effectually to eject sin out of its throne and dominion. For whereas, when we come under the power of grace, sin can no longer have dominion over us; Rom. vi. 12. so the Spirit begins now to ‘lust against the flesh;’ as Gal. v. 17. aiming at, and intending, a complete victory or conquest. There was upon bare conviction a contest before in the soul, but it was merely between the mind and conscience on the one hand, and the will on the other. The will was still absolutely bent on sin, only some head was made against its inclinations by the light of the mind before sin, and rebukes of conscience after it. But the conflict begins now to be in the will itself. A new principle of grace being infused

thereinto, opposeth those habitual inclinations unto evil, which were before predominant in it. This fills the mind with amazement, and, in some, brings them to the very door of despair, because they see not how nor when they shall be delivered. So was it with the person instanced in. Lib. 8. cap. 5. ‘*Voluntas nova quæ mihi esse cœperit, ut te gratis colerem fruique te vellem, Deus sola certa jucunditas, nondum erat idonea ad superandam priorem vetustate roboratam. Ita duæ voluntates meæ, una vetus, alia nova, illa carnalis, illa spiritualis confligebant inter se, atque discordando dissipabant animam meam. Sic intelligebam meo ipso experimento id quod legeram, quomodo caro concupisceret adversus spiritum et spiritus adversus carnem; ego quidem in utroque, sed magis ego in eo quod in me approbabam quam in eo quod in me improbabam. Ibi enim magis jam non ego, quia ex magna parte id patiebar invitus, quod faciebam volens.*’—‘The new will, which began to be in me, whereby I would love thee, O my God, the only certain sweetness, was not yet able to overcome my former will, confirmed by long continuance. So my two wills, the one old, the other new, the one carnal, the other spiritual, conflicted between themselves, and rent my soul by their disagreement. Then did I understand by experience in myself what I had read, how the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusteth against the flesh. I was myself on both sides, but more in that which I approved in myself than in what I condemned in myself. I was not more in that which I condemned, because for the most part I suffered unwillingly what I did willingly,’ This conflict between grace and sin in the will he most excellently expresseth, cap. 9—11. delivering those things which more or less are evident in the experience of those who have passed through this work. His fluctuations, his promises, his hopes, and fears, the ground he got and lost, the pangs of conscience and travail of soul which he underwent in the new birth, are all of them graphically represented by him.

In this *tumult* and distress of the soul, God oftentimes quiets it by some suitable word of truth administered unto it, either in the preaching of the gospel, or by some other means disposed in his providence unto the same end. In the midst of this storm and disorder he comes and says, ‘*Peace be still.*’

For, together with his word, he communicates some influence of his grace, that shall break the rebellious strength, and subdue the power, of sin, and give the mind satisfaction in a full resolution for its everlasting relinquishment. So was it with him mentioned, when in the condition described, he was hurried up and down almost like a distracted person, whilst he suffered the terrors of the Lord, sometimes praying, sometimes weeping, sometimes alone, sometimes in the company of his friends, sometimes walking, and sometimes lying on the ground, he was by an unusual occurrence warned to take up a book and read: the book next him was that of Paul's epistle, which taking up and opening, the place he first fixed his eyes upon, was Rom. xiii. 13, 14. 'Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Immediately on the reading of these words, there was an end put unto his perplexing conflict. He found his whole soul by the power of almighty grace subdued wholly to the will of God, and fixed unto a prevalent resolution of adhering to him with a relinquishment of sin, with an assured composure upon the account of the success he should have therein through Jesus Christ. Immediately he declared what he had done, what had befallen him, first to his friend, then to his mother, which proved the occasion of conversion to the one, and inexpressible joy to the other. The end of the story deserves to be reported in his own words; '*Arripui librum, aperui, legi,—nec ultra volui legere nec opus erat. Statim quippe cum fine hujusce sententiæ quasi luce securitatis infusâ cordi meo, omnes dubitationis tenebræ defugerunt. Tum interjecto aut digito aut nescio quo alio signo codicem clausi, et tranquillo cum vultu indicavi Alipio. At ille quid in se ageretur quod ego nesciebam sic indicavit. Petit videre quid legissem; ostendi, et attendit etiam ultra quam ego legeram, et ignorabam quid sequeretur. Sequebatur vero, infirmum autem in fide assumite. Quod ille ad se retulit mihi que aperuit; sed tali admonitione firmatus est, placitoque et proposito, bono et congruentissimo suis moribus, quibus a me in melius jam olim valde longeque distabat, sine ulla turbulenta cunctatione conjunctus est. Inde ad matrem in-*

gredimur, indicamus, gaudet; narramus quemadmodum gestum sit, exultat et triumphat, et benedicit tibi, qui potens es ultra quam petimus aut intelligimus facere;’ lib. 8. cap. 12. ‘Having read these verses I would read no more, nor was there any need that so I should do. For upon the end of that sentence, as if a light of peace or security had been infused into my heart, all darkness of doubts fled away; marking the book with my finger put into it, or by some other sign, I shut it, and with a quiet countenance declared what was done to Alipius. And hereupon he also declared what was at work in himself, whereof I was ignorant. He desired to see what I had read, which when I had shewed him, he looked farther than I had read, nor did I know what followed. But it was this, ‘Him that is weak in the faith receive,’ which he applied unto himself and declared it unto me; confirmed by this admonition, with a firm purpose and suitable to his manners, wherein he formerly much excelled me, he was joined to me without any turbulent delay. We go in hereon unto my mother, and declare what was done; she rejoiceth; we make known the manner of it how it was done; she exulteth and triumpheth, and blesseth thee, O God, who art able to do for us more than we know how to ask or understand.’ And these things doth the holy man express to bear witness, as he says, ‘Adversus typhum humani generis,’ to ‘repress the swelling pride of mankind.’ And in the example of Alipius we have an instance, how variously God is pleased to effect this work in men, carrying some through strong convictions, deep humiliations, great distresses, and perplexing terrors of mind, before they come to peace and rest; leading others gently and quietly without any visible disturbances, unto the saving knowledge of himself by Jesus Christ.

Secondly, A second thing which befalls men under this work of *conviction*, is a *dread* and *fear* as to their eternal condition. There doth befall them an apprehension of that wrath which is due to their sins, and threatened in the curse of the law to be inflicted on them. This fills them with afflictive perturbations of mind, with dread and terror, consternation and humbling of their souls thereon. And what befalls the minds of men on this account, is handled by some distinctly under the names or titles of ‘Dolor legalis,’ ‘timor

servilis,' 'atritio mentis,' 'compunctio cordis,' 'humiliatio animæ;' 'Legal sorrow,' 'servile fear,' 'attrition of mind,' 'compunction,' 'and humiliation,' and the like. And as these things have been handled most of them by modern divines, and cast into a certain series and dependance on one another, with a discovery of their nature and degrees, and how far they are required in order unto sincere conversion and sound believing; so they are all of them treated on in their way by the school-men, as also they were before them by many of the fathers. The charge therefore of novelty which is laid by some against the doctrine of these things, ariseth from a fulsome mixture of ignorance and confidence. Whether, therefore, all things that are delivered concerning these things be right or no, sure enough I am that the whole doctrine about them, for the substance of it, is no newer than the gospel, and that it hath been taught in all ages of the church. What is needful to be received concerning it, I shall reduce to the ensuing heads.

1. *Conviction of sin* being ordinarily by the law, either immediately or by light and truth thence derived; there doth ordinarily accompany it a *deep sense* and *apprehension* of the eternal danger which the soul is liable unto, on the account of the *guilt of the sin* whereof it is convinced. For the law comes with its whole power upon the mind and conscience. Men may be partial in the law, the law will not be partial. It doth not only convince by its light, but also at the same time condemns by its authority. For what the law speaks, 'it speaks unto them that are under the law.' It takes men under its power, then shutting them under sin, it speaks unto them in great severity. This is called the coming of the commandment, and slaying of a sinner; Rom. vii. 9.

2. This apprehension will ordinarily ingenerate *disquieting and perplexing affections* in the minds of men; nor can it be otherwise where it is fixed and prevalent. As, (1.) *sorrow* and *shame* for and of what they have done. Shame was the first thing wherein conviction of sin discovered itself; Gen. iii. 7. And sorrow always accompanieth it; Acts ii. 37. Hearing these things *κατενύγησαν τῇ καρδίᾳ*, 'they were pierced with perplexing grief in their heart.' Their eyes are opened to see the guilt and sense of sin, which pierceth them through with dividing sorrow. (2.) *Fear of eternal wrath*;

this keeps the soul in bondage ; Heb. ii. 14. and is accompanied with torment. The person so convinced, believes the threatening of the law to be true and trembles at it. An eminent instance whereof we have in our first parents also ; Gen. iii. 16. (3.) Perplexing *'unsatisfactory inquiries* after means and ways for deliverance out of this present distress and from future misery. What shall we do ? What shall we do to be saved ? is the restless inquiry of such persons ; Micah vii. 8. Acts ii. 37. xvi. 30.

3. These things will assuredly put the soul on *many duties*, as prayer for deliverance, abstinence from sin, endeavours after a general change of life ; in all which and the like, this *conviction* puts forth and variously exerciseth its power.

4. We do not ascribe the effects intended unto the *mere working* of the passions of the minds of men upon the rational consideration of their state and condition, which yet cannot but be grievous and afflictive. These things may be so proposed unto men and pressed on them, as that they shall not be able to avoid their consideration, and the conclusions which naturally follow on them. And yet they may not be in the least affected with them as we see by experience. Wherefore we say moreover, that the law or the doctrine of it, when the consciences of men are effectually brought under its power, is accompanied with a secret virtue from God called a 'spirit of bondage,' which causeth a sense of the curse of it to take a deep impression on the soul, to fill it with fear and dread, yea sometimes with horror and despair. This the apostle calls the 'spirit of bondage unto fear;' Rom. viii. 15. and declares at large how all that are under the law, that is, the convincing and condemning power of it, are in bondage, nor doth the law in the administration of it, lead or gender unto any thing else but bondage ; Gal. iv. 22—24.

5. The *substance* of these things is ordinarily found in those who are converted unto God, when grown up unto the use of reason, and capable of impressions from external administrations. Especially are they evident in the minds and consciences of such as have been engaged in any open sinful course or practice. But yet no certain rule or measure of them can be prescribed, as necessary in or unto any antecedaneously unto conversion. To evince the truth hereof

two things may be observed : (1.) That perturbations, sorrows, dejections, dread, fears, are no duty unto any ; only they are such things as sometimes ensue or are immitted into the mind, upon that which is a duty indispensable, namely, conviction of sin. They belong not to the precept of the law, but to its curse. They are no part of what is required of us, but of what is inflicted on us. There is a gospel-sorrow and humiliation after believing that is a duty, that is both commanded and hath promises annexed unto it. But this legal sorrow is an effect of the curse of the law and not of its command. (2.) God is pleased to exercise a prerogative and sovereignty in this whole matter, and deals with the souls of men in unspeakable variety. Some he leads by the gates of death and hell unto rest in his love, like the people of old through the waste and howling wilderness into Canaan; and the paths of others he makes plain and easy unto them. Some walk or wander long in darkness ; in the souls of others Christ is formed in the first gracious visitation.

6. There is, as was said, no certain *measure or degree* of these accidents or consequents of conviction to be prescribed unto any as *antecedaneously necessary* to sincere conversion and sound believing : but these two things in general are so : (1.) Such a conviction of sin, that is, of a state of sin, of a course of sin, of actual sins, against the light of natural conscience, as that the soul is satisfied that it is thereby obnoxious unto the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. Thus at least doth God conclude and shut up every one under sin on whom he will have mercy ; ‘ for every mouth must be stopped, and all become guilty before God ;’ Rom. iii. 19. Gal. iii. 22. without this no man ever did, nor will ever sincerely, believe in Jesus Christ. For he calleth none unto him, but those who in some measure are weary or thirsty, or one way or other seek after deliverance. The whole, he tells us, that is, those who so conceit themselves, have no need of a physician, they will neither inquire after him, nor care to go unto him when they are invited so to do : see Isa. xxxii. 2. (2.) A due apprehension and resolved judgment that there is no way within the compass of a man’s own contrivance to find out, or his ability to make use of and to walk in, nor any other way of God’s appointment or approbation, which will deliver the soul in and from the state and condition

wherein it is, and that which it fears, but only that which is proposed in the gospel by Jesus Christ.

7. Where these things are, the duty of a person so convinced, is to inquire after and to receive the *revelation of Jesus Christ*, and the *righteousness of God* in him ; John i. 13. And in order hereunto, he ought, (1.) To *own the sentence of the law* under which he suffereth, justifying God in his righteousness, and the law in its holiness, whatever be the issue of this dispensation towards himself ; Rom. iii. 19, 20. vii. 12, 13. For God in this work intends to break the stubbornness of men's hearts, and to hide pride from them ; Rom. iii. 4. (2.) Not *hastily* to believe every thing that will propose itself unto him as a remedy or means of relief ; Micah vi. 6, 7. The things which will present themselves in such a case, as means of relief, are of two sorts. [1.] Such as the fears and superstitions of men have suggested or will suggest. That which hath raised all the false religion which is in the world, is nothing but a contrivance for the satisfaction of men's consciences under convictions. To pass by gentilism, this is the very life and soul of popery. What is the meaning of the sacrifice of the mass, of purgatory, of pardons, penances, indulgencies, abstinences, and the like things innumerable, but only to satisfy conscience by them perplexed with a sense of sin ? Hence many among them, after great and outrageous wickednesses, do betake themselves to their highest monastical severity. The life and soul of superstition consists in endeavours to quiet and charm the consciences of men convinced of sin. [2.] That which is pressed with most vehemency and plausibility, being suggested by the law itself in a way of escape from the danger of its sentence, as the sense of what it speaks represented in a natural conscience, is *legal righteousness* to be sought after in amendment of life. This proposeth itself unto the soul, as with great importunity, so with great advantages, to farther its acceptance. For, 1st. the *matter* of it is *unquestionably necessary*, and without it in its proper place, and with respect unto its proper end, there is no sincere conversion unto God. 2nd. It is looked on as the *sense of the law*, or as that which will give satisfaction thereunto. But there is a deceit in all these things, as to the end proposed ; and if any *amendment of life* be leaned on to that pur

pose, it will prove a *broken reed*, and pierce the hand of him that rests upon it. For although the law require at all times an abstinence from sin, and so for the future, which in a sinner is amendment of life; yet it proposeth it not as that which will deliver any soul from the guilt of sin already contracted, which is the state under consideration. And if it win upon the mind to accept of its terms unto that end or purpose, it can do no more, nor will do less, than shut up the person under its curse.

(2.) It is the duty of persons in such a condition to beware of entangling temptations. As, [1.] that they have not attained such a degree of sorrow for sin and humiliation, as is necessary unto them that are called to believe in Jesus Christ. There was, indeed, more reason of giving caution against temptations of this kind in former days, when preachers of the gospel dealt more severely, I wish I may not also say more sincerely, with the consciences of convinced sinners, than it is the manner of most now to do. But it is yet possible that herein may lie a mistake; seeing no such degrees of these things as some may be troubled about, are prescribed for any such end, either in the law or gospel. [2.] That those who persuade them to believe, know not how great sinners they are, but yet they know that Christ called the greatest; and it is an undervaluation of the grace of Christ to suppose that the greatest sins should disappoint the effects of it in any that sincerely come unto him.

The last thing, whereby this work of conversion to God is completed, as to the outward means of it, which is the ingenerating and acting of faith in God by Jesus Christ, remains alone to be considered, wherein all possible brevity and plainness shall be consulted. And I shall comprise what I have to offer on this head in the ensuing observations.

1. This is the *proper and peculiar work of the gospel*, and ever was so from the first giving of the promise. ‘The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;’ John i. 18. Rom. i. 16. 1 Pet. i. 23. James i. 18. Eph. iii. 8—10.

2. To this purpose it is necessary that the *gospel*, that is, the doctrine of it concerning redemption, righteousness, and salvation, by Jesus Christ, be *declared* and made known

to convinced sinners. And this also is an effect of sovereign wisdom and grace; Rom. x. 13—15.

3. The declaration of the gospel is accompanied with a *revelation* of the will of God, with respect unto the faith and obedience of them unto whom it is declared. This is the work of God, the work which he requires at our hands, 'that we believe in him whom he hath sent;' John vi. 29. And this command of God unto sinners, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation, the gospel teacheth us to press from the manifold aggravations which attend the sin of not complying therewith. For it is, as therein declared; (1.) A rejection of the testimony of God, which he gives unto his wisdom, love, and grace, with the excellency and certainty of the way of salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, which is to make God a liar; 1 John v. 10. iii. 32, 33. (2.) A contempt of love and grace, with the way and means of their communication to lost sinners by the blood of the Son of God, which is the highest provocation that can be offered unto the divine majesty.

4. In the declaration of the gospel the Lord Christ is in an especial manner proposed as *crucified and lifted up* for the especial object of our faith; John iii. 14, 15. Gal. iii. 1. And this proposition of Christ hath included in it an invitation unto all convinced sinners to come unto him for life and salvation; Isa. xlv. 2. lxxv. 1.

5. The Lord Christ being proposed unto sinners in the gospel, and their acceptance or receiving of him being urged on them, it is withal declared for *what end* he is so proposed. And this is in general to save them from their sins, Matt. i. 21. or the wrath to come, whereof they are afraid; 1 Thess. i. 10. For in the evangelical proposition of him there is included; (1.) That there is a way yet remaining for sinners, whereby they may escape the curse of the law, and the wrath of God which they have deserved; Psal. cxxx. 4. Job xxxiii. 24. Acts iv. 12. (2.) That the foundation of these ways lies in an atonement made by Jesus Christ unto the justice of God, and satisfaction to his law for sin; Rom. iii. 25. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13. (3.) That God is well pleased with this atonement, and his will is that we should accept of it, and acquiesce in it; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. Isa. liii. 11, 12. Rom. v. 10, 11.

6. It is proposed and promised, that through and upon their believing, that is, on Christ as proposed in the gospel for the only way of redemption and salvation, *convinced sinners shall be pardoned*, justified, and acquitted before God, discharged of the law against them, through the *imputation* unto them of what the Lord Christ hath done for them and suffered in their stead ; Rom. viii. 3. x. 3, 4. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. 2 Cor. v. 21. Eph. ii. 8—10.

7. To prevail with and win over the souls of men, unto a *consent* to receive Christ on the terms wherein he is proposed ; that is, to believe in him, and trust unto him, to what he is, hath done, and suffered, and continueth to do, for pardon of sin, life and salvation, the gospel is filled with *arguments, invitations, encouragements, exhortations, promises*, all of them designed to explain and declare the love, grace, faithfulness, and good-will of God herein. In the due management and improvement of these parts of the gospel, consists the principal wisdom and skill of the ministers of the New Testament.

8. Among these various ways or means of the declaration of himself and his will, God frequently causeth some *especial word*, promise, or passage, to fix itself on the *mind of a sinner*, as we saw it in the instance before insisted on. Hereby the soul is first excited to exert and act the faith wherewith it is endued, by the effectual working of the Spirit of God before described. And by this means are men directed unto rest, peace, and consolation, in that variety of degrees wherein God is pleased to communicate them.

9. *This acting of faith on Christ*, through the promise of the gospel, for pardon, righteousness and salvation, is inseparably accompanied with, and that faith is the root and infallible cause of, a *universal engagement of heart unto all holy obedience to God in Christ*, with a relinquishment of all known sin, necessarily producing a thorough change and reformation of life, and fruitfulness in obedience. For as, upon a discovery of the love of God in Christ, the promises whereby it is exhibited unto us being mixed with faith, the soul of a poor sinner will be filled with godly sorrow and shame for its former sins, and will be deeply humbled for them ; so all the faculties of it being now renewed and inwardly changed, it can no more refrain from the love of holiness, and from

an engagement into a watchful course of universal obedience unto God, by such free actings as are proper unto it, than one that is new born can refrain from all acts of life natural, in motion, desire of food, and the like. Vain and foolish therefore are the reproaches of some, who, in a high course of a worldly life and profane, do charge others with preaching a justification by faith alone in Christ Jesus unto a neglect of holiness, righteousness, and obedience to God; which such scoffers and fierce despisers of all that are good do so earnestly plead for. Those whom they openly reflect upon, do unanimously teach, that the faith which doth not purify the heart and reform the life, which is not fruitful in good works, which is not an effectual cause and means of repentance and newness of life, is not genuine nor pleadable unto justification, but empty, dead, and that which, if trusted unto, will eternally deceive the souls of men. They do all of them press the indispensable necessity of universal holiness, godliness, righteousness, or obedience to all the commands of God, on surer principles, with more cogent arguments, in a more clear compliance with the will, grace, and love of God in Christ, than any they pretend unto, who ignorantly and falsely traduce them, as those who regard them not. And as they urge an obediential holiness, which is not defective in any duty either towards God or man, which they either plead for or pretend unto; so it contains that in it which is more sublime, spiritual, and heavenly, than what they are either acquainted with or do regard; which in its proper place shall be made more fully to appear.

10. Those who were thus converted unto God in the *primitive times* of the church, were upon their confession or profession hereof admitted into church-society, and a participation of all the *mysteries* thereof. And this being the common way whereby any were added unto the fellowship of the faithful, it was an effectual means of intense love without dissimulation among them all, on the account of their joint interest in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I shall shut up this discourse with one instance hereof, given us by Austin, in the conversion and admission into church-society of Victorinus a Platonical philosopher; as he received the story from Simplicianus, by whom he was baptized; ‘*Ut ventum est ad horam profitendæ fidei quæ verbis certis re-*

tentisque memoriter, de loco eminentiore in conspectu populi fidelis Romæ reddi solet ab eis qui accessuri sunt ad gratiam tuam, oblatum esse dicebat Victorino a presbyteris, ut secretius redderet, sicut non nullis qui verecundia trepidaturi videbantur offerri mos erat; illum autem maluisse salutem suam in conspectu sanctæ multitudinis profiteri, non enim erat salus quam docebat in rhetorica et tamen eam publice professus erat. Quanto minus vereri debuit mansuetam gregem tuam pronuncians verbum tuum, qui non verebatur in verbis suis turbas insanorum? Itaque ubi ascendit ut redderet, omnes sibimet invicem ut eum noverant, instrepuerunt nomen ejus strepitu congratulationis. Quis autem ibi eum non noverat? Et sonuit presso sonitu per ora cunctorum, Victorinus, Victorinus; cito sonuerunt exultatione quia videbant eum, cito siluerunt intentione ut audirent eum; pronunciat ille fidem veracem præclara fiducia, et volebant eum omnes rapere intro in cor suum; et rapiebant amando et gaudendo. Hæ rapiendum manus erant;’ lib. 8. cap. 2. Not a few things concerning the order, discipline, and fervent love of the primitive Christians in their church-societies, are intimated and represented in these words, which I shall not here reflect upon.

And this is the *second great work* of the Spirit of God in the new creation. This is a summary description of his forming and creating the members of that *mystical body*, whose head is Christ Jesus. The latter part of our discourse concerning the *external manner of regeneration* or conversion unto God, with the gradual preparation for it, and accomplishment of it, in the souls of men, is that subject which many practical divines of this nation, have in their preaching and writings much insisted on and improved, to the great profit and edification of the church of God. But this whole doctrine, with all the declarations and applications of it, is now, by some among ourselves, derided and exposed to scorn, although it be known to have been the constant doctrine of the most learned prelates of the church of England. And as the doctrine is exploded, so all experience of the work itself in the souls of men, is decried as fanatical and enthusiastical.

To obviate the pride and wantonness of this filthy spirit, I have, in the summary representation of the work itself now

given, confirmed the several instances of it, with the experience of the great and holy man so often named. For, whereas some of those by whom this doctrine and work are despised, are puffed up with a conceit of their excellency in the theatrical sceptical faculty of these days, unto a contempt of all by whom they are contradicted in the most importune of their dictates; yet if they should swell themselves until they break, like the frog in the fable, they would never prevail with their fondest admirers, to admit them into a competition with the immortal wit, grace, and learning, of that eminent champion of the truth, and light of the age wherein he lived.