

CHRIST'S WITNESS

WITHIN US,

THE

BELIEVER'S SPECIAL ADVANTAGE

AGAINST

TEMPTATIONS TO INFIDELITY.

“ But when the Comforter (or Advocate) is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father ; the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”—*JOHN xv. 26, 27.*

TO THE READER.

READER,

WHILE the foregoing sermons on Gal. iii. 2. were in the press, I thought it not unmeet to peruse this sermon and annex it thereto, to make up the discourse more useful to true believers. I confess I did purposely handle this text more largely when I preached on it, with the 11th and 12th verses, for the explication of another point; and this was but slightly touched on the by; yet because it is suitable to the rest, and seasonable for weaklings in these shaking times, I have chosen to annex it, in hope it may somewhat conduce to their establishment, whereto I desire of God that He will use and bless it.

CHRIST'S WITNESS, &c.

I JOHN v. 10.

“ He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar ; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”

Sect. I.

THE apostle having, in the fourth and fifth verses, extolled the grace of faith in Christ, from its successful victory over the world ; doth proceed, in the following verses, to magnify it : 1. From the full and certain testimony, which doth animate and support it. 2. From the nature of its object and office. The first he doth in the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th verses ; the latter in the 11th, and 12th, and some following. In the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses, the witnesses are enumerated : in the 9th verse, the validity and unquestionable authority of the testimony is proved. In the 10th verse is declared, 1. The privilege of true believers, and the advantage which they have for further certainty : 2. The heinousness of the sin of infidelity.

Though it be the first part of the 10th verse which I am now to handle, yet, because we cannot so well understand what is meant by ‘ the witness ’ here, unless we look back to the precedent verses, let us briefly consider them.

In the 6th verse, the apostle, extolling the object of faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, declareth with what convincing evidence he showed himself unto the world : “ He came by water and blood, and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” Whereupon he further enumerateth the glorious trinity of witnesses in heaven, and the trinity of witnesses on earth. (Verse 7, 8.) The extraordinary diversity of reading in these two verses, and the specious arguments brought for each of them, I purposely overpass, as not concerning much my intended business ; but what these witnesses are I shall briefly inquire. 1. The Father, the Word, and the Spirit, are the

three in heaven, which bear witness : it is on earth that they witness ; but it is in heaven that these witnesses are in glory.

1. The Father witnessed of the Son, as by describing him in prophesies and promises, before his coming, so by many notable attestations at his birth, and afterwards sending a choir of angels to predicate and honour his nativity ; leading men to him by an extraordinary star, and other like means ; and in an eminent manner at his more solemn entering upon his office, at his baptism, proclaiming him by a voice from heaven to be his Beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased ; and to this testimony the text may seem to have some special respect : as also, he owned him by a voice from heaven, before his suffering. (John xii. 28.) And divers other ways.^a

2. The Lord Jesus himself, the Word of the Father, hath fully attested his own office and doctrine, not by naked affirmations only (for if he so bore witness of himself, he tells us, his witness were nothing.) But by proving his mission and commission from the Father, by the prophets, by his doctrine, and by the works which he did : which were such as perfectly answered his commission, and such as no man else could do.

3. The Spirit bore witness to Christ and his truth, both in the mouths of those prophets that foretold his coming, and by a more full attestation, when he was come, when he was baptised, it lighted on him in the form of a dove ; in himself and his disciples, it gloriously appeared, as I have more largely expressed in the foregoing discourse.

But for the three witnesses on earth, though we are agreed in the matter, yet expositors are not of one mind about the sense of the words in this text ; what is meant by Spirit, water, and blood. The first doubt is, what is meant by the Spirit ? If it be the Holy Ghost, then is not this witness on earth, the same with one of those in heaven ? To avoid this, some like those copies that leave out the 7th verse ; some, as Piscator, by the Holy Ghost here, understand the Gospel : some take it only for the spirits which with the water and blood went out of the side of Christ on the cross. I rather judge that in the 7th verse, by the Spirit is meant the Holy Ghost considered, not as he is in heaven in glory, but witnessing on earth : but in the 8th verse is meant the same Holy Spirit, as he is and wit-

^a Matt. xvii. 5 ; xxxv. 17, and iii. 16 ; John v. 32 ; viii. 18 ; v. 36 ; i. 1 ; iv. 26 ; v. 17, &c. ; vi. 29, &c. ; vii. 46 ; viii. 12, &c. ; x. 21, &c., and i. 33, 34 ; 1 John i. 1 ; Acts ii. 3, 4, 32, and ix. 3—6.

nesseth here on earth. For as he appeared in the shape of a dove on Christ, and of fiery tongues on his disciples, so is he said to be, to dwell and work in the souls of believers.

The cleansings in the law were by water and blood: by blood for expiation, and by water for actual abstersion.^b But as Christ was to be the true efficient of what these were the types, seeing the law itself could neither expiate nor cleanse a defiled soul, so especially was the gift of the Spirit, a thing beyond the compass of the law, and the eminent privilege of those Gospel times, and the special witness to the verity of his word. It is not unlikely, that in the 6th verse the apostle had respect to Christ's fulfilling the legal types, as Calvin, Piscator, and others judge, and so here also: but how was it that he fulfilled them? I see no reason why we should restrain the sense to any one act or passage of Christ's life, as many do, but more comprehensively expound it thus. It was both expiation of guilt, and abstersion of the filth of sin, that lost souls did need for their recovery: it was both which the law prefigured to be done by the Messias: it is both that he did; and sent forth his Spirit in a most eminent, triumphant manner to do the one, and by wonders also to bear witness to his name in the world.^c He was himself baptised, first with John's baptism of water, and then by the Holy Ghost, descending on him as a dove, at the chief entrance upon his work; and lastly, by a baptism of blood in the *Exitus*, toward the finishing of his preparations on earth. He sweat water and blood in the garden in his agony. He shed water and blood from his side upon the cross.^d He lived accordingly, a life, first of pure innocency, without sin; secondly, a life of suffering, even to the death of the cross, both to expiate our sins, and to seal his testament, and to teach us self-denial and patience, by his example; thirdly, he walked in the power of the Holy Ghost, doing wonders, and doing good, and was quickened and raised by the Spirit from the dead. And as these testimonies were left by him on certain record, so did he accordingly transcribe it upon the souls of his disciples, and do these works also on them, and drew out his image on their souls, and left his cures, and wondrous gifts thus visible on earth, to be witnesses of him in the world.

^b John x. 25, 36, 38; v. 32, 36; xiv. 2; xv. 24, 26; xvi. 13, and xiv. 26; Acts xi. 22; 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

^c John i. 23; Eph. v. 27; Tit. iii. 5; Heb. x. 22; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Isa. i. 16; Jer. iv. 14.

^d John xviii. 37; 1 Tim. vi. 13.

First, The Spirit he poured out on his church, even to the astonishment of the world, and the conviction of unbelievers, by the various and mighty works which were done; and he gave it to be resident in true believers, as his house and temple.^e

Secondly, He cleanseth them by his word and Spirit, from their former uncleanness, even the filth of sin.

Thirdly, He washeth them in his blood by the application of it, in its fruits, from the guilt of sin: he bringeth them to so much self-denial, as in preparation and resolution, to lay down their lives, and shed their blood for him: and when he calleth them to it, he wonderfully sustaineth them, so that his people are living witnesses of his power and truth. The Spirit of power on the first churches, and the Spirit of holiness on all, is his infallible witness; his sanctified ones, that are cleansed from their former wickedness, are his witnesses; his pardoned, justified, adopted ones, are his witnesses. And as they are thus objectively a threefold witness to him, so are they actually, effectively, and expressly. They give him themselves, and fullest testimony in a threefold baptism as it were. They are baptised with water, and there openly own him, and take him for their Redeemer: they are oftentimes baptised with blood in actual martyrdom, and so own him to the death: and in the sacrament of his supper they feed upon his blood, and renew their resignation, and their testimony of him. They are baptised with the Holy Ghost, and then exalt him in the throne of their souls, and his kingdom is set up within them.

And thus we see what are the three witnesses on earth, viz. the Spirit, water, and blood.^f

Sect. II.

Let us now see what is that, "Witness in ourselves," which the text in hand mentioneth: I see no reason to restrain this neither, to any one way of having the witness in ourselves, but shall take it more comprehensively.

1. He that believeth hath a witness in himself, in that he hath received God's testimony of his Son; and so that which was external, is admitted within, and that which was an object aptitudinal, offered, propounded, and the reception of it com-

^e Acts i. 5, 8, and ii. 1.

^f In the first age, and long after, the churches used to mix wine and water in the sacrament: as appears in 'Justin Martyr's Apology,' and many others.

manded, is now become an object actually believed and entertained. And thus all believers have the witness in themselves, as the object is in the present act, and so in the recipient agent.

Obj. That is no more than to say; 'He that believeth doth believe.'

Answ. It is to declare what believing is; it is the reception of the divine testimony: and so upon our believing, that which was before only without us, written in our books, or spoken by men, is now within us, transcribed by the Spirit of grace upon our hearts: but, yet, though this be part of the sense, I take it not for the whole, therefore I add:

2. He that believeth, hath the witness in himself, in a radicated habit of the aforesaid belief, supposing him to be a sound believer; for it is the Spirit of Christ that worketh this faith; that not only revealeth the object from without, but useth it also on the soul, as a man doth a seal by impressing it on the wax: and the same Spirit confirmeth and maintaineth this habit, having made it his office to be the sanctifier of believers, and the finisher of their faith: so that as he believeth, so he shall believe; the Spirit of life, being the preserver and maintainer of his faith.

3. He hath, also, the witness in himself, more confirmedly, in that the same Spirit is at hand to be the exciter of his faith; and not only to give him a habit, or power; but, also, to cause him to bring it forth into act, so that it is no small advantage against temptations to infidelity, which he that soundly believeth, hath already in himself.

4. He that believeth, hath, by the same Holy Spirit, not only his understanding thus cleared and persuaded, but, also, his will effectually inclined to Christ, and to God the Father, by him: and his heart affected so much with the goodness that is in him, and the goodness that hath flowed from him; in the wonders of love, which he hath manifested to sinners; and with the goodness, which he is in hope of, when the promises are all fulfilled; that there is by these, as it were, a new nature within him: he hath new thoughts, new designs, new desires, hopes, love, delights; he is now driving a new trade in this world, for another world, and set upon a work which before he was a stranger to; so that he is now become in Christ a new creature: "Old things are passed away, and all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) He that would now tempt him to infidelity, and persuade him from Christ, must not only persuade him against his radicated, maintained belief, but also against his

love, his desire, his hope, his joys, against his very heart, and new nature.

5. And it increaseth his advantage, that this love, desire, hope, and whole new disposition, is radicated, maintained, and excited by the same Holy Spirit, who dwelleth in the soul, and manageth it for Christ, even as its belief itself is ; and the very radication, maintaining, and exciting of true belief, is the radication, confirmation, and exciting of these, as the moving of the first wheel is the moving of the rest.

6. But the most observable part of the sense, is this : that all these received impressions on the soul, are a standing testimony in us, which we may have recourse to for the future, for the repelling of temptations, and the confirmation of our faith. They are a witness within us, as the objects or evidence, for our future belief, and not only, as I said before, as the received object of our present belief. Our present actual, and habitual faith, and renovation of our souls, and the sacred inclinations and actions therein contained, are a standing evidence within us ; as the written word and the miracles of Christ are without us ; from which we may soundly argue for the verity of Christianity, and may look on them as an infallible testimony for Christ. For none but the sacred Redeemer of the world, approved by the Father, and working by his Spirit, could do such works, as are done on the souls of all that are truly sanctified.

7. And I suppose it is not the least part of the apostles' meaning, "That he that believed then, had that extraordinary Spirit of wonders, in one kind or other, which was purposely then given to be a seal to the christian verity, and the great witness of Christ ;" (Mark xvi. 17;) for the promise was fulfilled then in one sort or other, in one measure or other, to all believers ; at least to all morally, that is, to the generality, or ordinarily.

I shall not add here, that immediate witness of the Spirit within us, which some assert is only sufficient ; which is neither an objective testifying from without, nor an objective testifying by the aforesaid works of grace within ; nor an effective testimony, by producing our belief of the objective, all which I have asserted ; but is moreover, first, either another in-objective testimony, as by an inward word or enunciation of another to our mind ; secondly, or else an efficient testifying, by causing us to believe without the objective evidence ; or, only upon this last supposed internal enunciation of his own : for these enthusiasms or inspirations, let them boast of them that have them ; but let them not blame me, if I prove them

not common, or necessary to all; nay, if I prove that the former without them, are a sufficient testimony within us, of the truth of Christ's doctrine. Concerning this controversy, I refer the learned reader to what is already fully written of it, by Rob. Baronius in 'Apodix. Cont. Turnebull.' against Spalatensis, and by Amyraldus in 'Thes. Salmuricus.' in the disputation of Scripture, and the Spirit's testimony. And, withal, I mention not here the Spirit itself the efficient, as dwelling in us, distinct from his works, because it is not the τὸ μαρτυρῶν that is here said to be in ourselves; but the ἡ μαρτυρία; not the *testis*, but the *testimonium*; though the English word 'witness' signify either; and though I know that other places of Scripture speak of the Spirit himself within us.

You see then the chief difficulty in the text explained, What, it is to have the testimony or record in ourselves.

Quest. But have all believers this testimony within themselves, or some only?

Answ. All: but not all in one degree; nor all in the same sort, as some have had it. The spirit of sanctification is common to all true believers; but so is not the spirit of miracles, or extraordinary gifts, though this also was ordinary in the first age of the christian church.

Quest. Is it only believers that have this witness in themselves?

Answ. Not only true and sound believers, but also hypocrites, unsound and half-believers had the spirit of miracles in the first age, which was a testimony within them; but only true and sound believers have the spirit of sanctification: and I think it was only such sound believers that had 'the promise' of the Spirit for extraordinary gifts and miracles; and that all other had it, above and beyond promise, as to any promise made to themselves; but yet as the fulfilling of a promise to the church, and to some that might receive the benefit of them. But it is of no great moment, especially to our present business, which way this last is determined.

Sect. III.

The reasons why God will have "All true believers to have the testimony of their christian religion in themselves," are these, among others, so far, as we may presume to give a reason of God's will, from the thing:

Reas. 1. It was God's will in revealing Christ to the world,

that his revelation should be a means of the restoration, and perfect felicity of his chosen ones; which it could not be at a distance, nor without being entertained into the inwards of their souls. For it was the soul that was wounded, and it is the soul that must have the cure, to which end, the application of the plaster is necessary. That light which shall illuminate a dark understanding, must be received into that understanding itself. That life which quickeneth, must be in the substance, which is quickened by it. If an external revelation or testimony of Christ, had been a fit means of itself, to recover men's souls, though they never received it, then might the Gospel save all alike, even the haters and despisers of it, as well as its truest friends; which is an unreasonable conceit; nay, what is it to be healed and recovered from our blindness, by the Gospel, but to be ourselves informed, convinced, and enlightened by it? and what is that, but to have received this testimony in ourselves? To be happy, is to be made perfect in ourselves, and in that perfection to enjoy God, our end; and our perfection lieth in the image of God upon us, which partly consisteth in knowledge; (Col. iii. 10); and in a clear reception, and discerning of his truth. It is not a light, or felicity, which is barely reported to us, that solaceth and satisfieth the soul of man, but a light and felicity, which he partaketh of himself.

Reas. 2. It is the nature of God's real possessed gifts, to manifest both themselves and their proper causes, to the soul that possesseth them; according to their degrees, and freedom of operation. Though sometimes, through darkness, delusion, and the stirrings of the contrary corruptions within us, we may be brought to overlook them, and doubt of their truth. Light hath a self-discovering property, to them that can see, and life is a testimony of its own existence, to the person that hath it; and so are the particular actions of life: and as grace is the testimony or discoverer of itself, so also of its cause. It beareth God's name in the face or nature of it: it is his own image, and therefore may discover much of him to the soul that beareth this image. The effects of the Spirit and doctrine of Christ, do show what that Spirit and doctrine are. If it make men holy, it is itself more holy.

Reas. 3. It is the order of God's works, that every foregoing part doth tend to the promoting of that which is to follow; as the revelation of Christ is the means of our believing, so our believing is a means of our fuller sanctification, and so far, of

our receiving the Spirit : as in the first age it was a means of their receiving the spirit of miracles and wonders : and that spirit and holiness is again a means of our increased belief ; even by testifying objectively to us the verity of the promise, which we find thus fulfilled in ourselves ; and therefore God will have us to have the witness in ourselves.

Reas. 4. It is God's purpose, in possessing his people with his Spirit, to make them the living monuments of his truth and goodness, that they may bear upon them his image and super-
 scription ; and as he is honoured by the truth and purity which is found in his laws, so will he be by the like excellencies that are found in his saints. They shall also be everlastingly employed in his praises, which must proceed from a heart that is filled with the lively sense of his goodness, and from a clear understanding of that for which they praise him, and therefore they must have the witness in themselves.

Sect. IV.

Use. If all true believers, having the Spirit of Christ, have the witness of the truth of the Gospel in themselves, we may hence be informed, how great an advantage such true believers have, above all other men in the world, for the resisting and overcoming of temptations to infidelity, and for a clearer discerning, and faster holding of the truth of the christian doctrine. Among others, you may observe the difference in these particulars following.

1. Unbelievers have a testimony indeed without them, but it is but without them, and therefore not so near at hand for their use ; but believers have it engraven on their very hearts, and as near to them as the very motions and inclinations of their own souls.

2. Unbelievers, therefore, have but an external light and object, without an inward light, or eye to discern them : for this, which is the witness within, is also the power of discerning the testimony, which is without. But the sound believer hath this visive power, and the light within to fit him to receive that from without. Like will to like. You may easier draw water to water, and by a place where water is before, than to or by the dry ground. You may more easily kindle fire, where fire is before, than where is none. The first degrees dispose to the reception of more. There is something in the eye that hath a nearer likeness and comaturation to the light without us, pro-

ceeding from the sun, than the hands or feet, or other parts have, or else the eye would see no more than they. And there is something in a holy, believing soul, which is thus kin to the truth of the Gospel, which is without us, and therefore doth fit the soul to entertain it.

3. The true believer, therefore, hath a double testimony ; one without, and one within : but the unbeliever hath but the single external testimony alone.

4. The witness within us, is more sensible and affecting. That which lieth as near us as our own hearts, is liker to work more effectually and deeply, than that which is at a greater distance.

5. The witness within us is still at hand, when the temptation comes : such Christians do carry their armour about them. They live still in arms. Whenever the tempter assaulteth them to stagger at God's promises, through unbelief, they have arguments in their own hearts to answer the temptation : so that they are not likely to be found unprovided, as other men are. Men's Bibles may be out of the way ; their teachers may be out of the way ; their memories may fail them, if they trusted only to these. The reasons which one day a little moved them, may be forgotten the next day ; or they may forget where the chief strength of them lieth ; or they may receive them with greater prejudice or disadvantage, as being staggered or perplexed with what is said or suggested to the contrary. But the settled, habituate testimony within us, is not so much liable to changes ; though, I know, that through temptations and distempers of soul, this also may sometime be much obscured. But yet it hath a great advantage of the other.

6. The witness within us is a permanent witness. It will go with us, which way soever we go ; it will accompany us through all straits and difficulties to the end : but the external testimony may be taken from us. Men may take from us our Bibles, our teachers, and our friends ; or they may imprison us, where we cannot enjoy them : but they cannot take from us the Spirit of Christ.

Consider, therefore, I beseech you, Christians, first, how great a mercy it is, that you have received ; secondly, and how you ought to improve this mercy ?

Sect. V.

1. And first, it may easily appear to you to be a very great mercy, if you do but consider these things following :

First, consider what it is that this testimony doth witness within you. It is the doctrine of your redemption and deliverance, by the Son of God, and of your future glorification in the fulfilling of his promises. If the happy news of man's recovery by a Mediator, should not have been true, then were we all still in our sin, and our faith and hope were but vain and delusory. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not: for if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins: then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable: but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. xv. 14, 16, 17.) What hope or consolation have we, but what depends upon the truth of the Gospel. If these glad tidings should fail us, all fails us. What else doth give us assurance of a future felicity? And without that, how wretched and despicable a creature is man; and how low and base are all the transactions and passages of his life, if they be not ennobled by their respects unto that end! Even the blindest infidel that denieth the truth of the Gospel, methinks, should easily confess the goodness of its promised happiness; and therefore see cause to wish that it were true, unless, as he hath brought himself under its terrors.

You see, then, it is the best news that ever came to the ears of man, that is attested to you by the witness within you: it is that which may cause you to live in hope, and peace, and joy; and to die in hope, and peace, and joy, while you believingly look to a blessed immortality, and upon your resurrection, as secured in the resurrection of Christ, and his promise of yours. Other men may confess that the truth of this is desirable; but you have the truth of it witnessed in your own hearts: to carry about with you such a witness, is to carry about the matter of continual joy. The same Spirit which is your sanctifier is your comforter, at least, by maintaining in you the grounds and

fit matter of consolation. How happy is such a soul that hath not only the voice behind him, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it;' but also the witness within him, that this voice is divine, and telling him of the end, which by that way he may attain. No wonder if the life of such a man be as a continual feast, and if he have a peculiar joy, as he hath a peculiar testimony, even such as the stranger meddleth not with.

Sect. VI.

Obj. But if all believers have such a consolatory witness in themselves, first, why are so many of them still troubled with doubtings, even about the truth of God's testimony? Secondly, Why are so many of them so dejected and disconsolate, and live as pensive, and sad a life as others?

Ans. 1. One reason is, because they do, by quenching and grieving the Spirit, too commonly hinder the fulness of the work, wherein this inward testimony doth consist; and so the Gospel is written on their hearts, in so small a character, that it is not easy to read and understand it; besides the many blots which it receives by some provoking transgressions. They that cheerfully obey the Spirit in his teaching and guidance, and receive the fuller character of the Gospel upon their hearts, and so are more fully conformed to their Head, "being transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. xii. 2.) These have a stronger and more confirmed belief, and usually the sweet effects of that belief, in a greater measure than others do obtain.

2. Yet, because this testimony, which all believers still have, is but objective; that is, such a work on their own souls, which is a sufficient evidence of the truth of the Gospel; it may be often overlooked, and the belief and comforts not obtained, which yet, in its kind, it is sufficient to afford: for it is not in every kind, but in its own kind, that the evidence is sufficient; and therefore doth suppose the concurrence of other necessaries. There must be a studious observation of this record, and, to that end, a keeping it from blots: and the same spirit, which dwelleth in us for sanctification, must excite the soul to this observation and improvement, and help us to read these evidences in ourselves: so that in a neglected, distempered heart, when there is naturally still a remnant of sin, and confusion, and accidentally more confusion; and when men are so strange to themselves, as

most of us are, and so little addicted to self-converse, and so little acquainted with it, and cast also so many impediments in their own way, and draw a veil over their evidences. What wonder if we do too defectively reap the fruit of them, and if such have yet much staggerings at the promise of God, and much disquietness and sadness in themselves?

3. And for consolation, it is not the highest, nor the most necessary part of the Spirit's works; and therefore he oft layeth it by, when so doing is necessary to the promoting of our sanctification, and will oft trouble us, or suffer us to be troubled, that he may heal us of that which is the cause of our trouble, and would else trouble us for ever. Though it be his office to be the Comforter, yet he doth not always comfort, because he must, by sorrow, prepare for seasonable, well-grounded comfort. You may have an expert physician with you, who may go on successfully in the cure, and yet not always give you present ease, but sometimes give you that which will irritate the disease, and increase your pain. Though the kingdom of God doth partly consist in joy in the Holy Ghost, yet as sorrow doth frequently prepare the way, so is it by sorrows frequently clouded and interrupted.

The witness within us, then, is a standing cause of consolation; but yet if through our folly we mar our own comforts, and make not use of the matter of them within us, or occasion the Spirit to leave us unto sadness, for the killing of some sin, and the promoting of our holiness; this is not a reason to question the inward testimony, but to reprehend our own folly and neglect.

Sect. VII.

2. It may further appear how great a mercy it is to have this witness in ourselves, by the earnest desires of believers to have more of it, when they have experience of the advantage of that measure, which they have obtained. When a Christian, in temptations, hath had recourse to the Gospel written in his heart, and hath had some support and confirmation by that witness in himself, though the voice were very low, and the characters but obscure, oh, how glad would he be of a further degree of that evidence! Could he hear that voice speak louder, and see the evidence of that transcript more clearly, it would be sweeter to him than to win the whole world. When the tempter would hide Christ and his grace from our eyes, what a comfort is

it, not only to find him, but even to find him in ourselves : for this telleth both together that there is a Christ, and that he is ours.

Sect. VIII.

3. The greatness of the sin of unbelief, and the danger into which it leads the sinner, or in which it leaves him, do tell us what a mercy it is to have the witness in ourselves, for the saving of us from that sin and danger. Alas ! what a case were thy soul in, if infidelity should prevail ! There may be so great a conflict in thy mind, through the imperfection of thy faith, and the insinuations of the tempter, as to force thee to cry out ' Lord, I believe ; help my unbelief.' But if unbelief get the mastery, how miserable is thy case. Thou wilt then be left in thy lost condition ! Thou wilt die in thy sin, and perish everlastingly for want of healing, while the Physician did offer thee his help, and was rejected : for how can it be expected that the Physician should heal those that will not believe him, nor trust themselves in his hands for a cure ? That Christ should save those that take him for a deceiver, and do not believe that he is able to save them, and therefore do not trust themselves on his sufficiency for salvation. He that believeth not is condemned already, and that in point of law, not only because he is in general a sinner, but in special, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. (John iii. 18—20.) " He that believeth not shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) No wonder, then, if a temptation to infidelity be received by a gracious soul with trembling and abhorrence, considering what would be the issue, if it did succeed. How great a mercy, then, must it needs be, to have so near and powerful a remedy against this desperate sin and danger, as is this witness that is continually resident in the saints.

Sect. IX.

4. As the sin of unbelief is great, and the punishment no less than eternal damnation, so are the temptations to it many and strong, and therefore the mercy is so much the greater to have the witness in ourselves. What can a Christian look upon in the world, which the malicious tempter will not make the matter of his temptation. The spirituality, the strangeness and seeming improbability of the matter, the plainness of the style, the seeming contradictions in the several parts, with many other the like,

doth he use as arguments to assault our belief with ; and the stronger are all these temptations against us : first, because they find so much darkness in ourselves. Since we fell from God, and holiness, and happiness, we have lost most of the knowledge of that God, and holiness, and happiness, which we fell from. They are enjoyed much by knowledge ; to lose them, therefore, is to lose the knowledge of them. The devil hath, therefore, a great advantage to deceive us, when he speaks to us about matters that we are naturally so unacquainted with ; yea, in losing God we have lost ourselves, and therefore are very much strangers to ourselves ; and so know not our own souls, and therefore are the more easily drawn to doubt of their immortality, and capacity of higher, supernatural enjoyments. Secondly, yea, we have not only a defect and darkness, but an opposition to the doctrine of our supernatural felicity, restored by Christ, till grace do overcome it. Being fallen from God to the creature, we adhere to this creature as we should have done to God ; and because it hath our hearts we are unwilling to look after a higher felicity, and therefore unwilling to hear of it and believe it. We savour not, naturally, the things of the Spirit, and therefore have no mind to believe them to be true ; and how hard it is for some men to believe that which they are loath should be true, experience may easily acquaint us. Men are fallen into a condition so near that of brutes, that it is more easy to persuade them that they shall die as the brutes, and are capable of no more felicity when this life is ended, than the dog or the swine, whom they lived like on earth. Having forfeited their hopes of eternal life, and so come short of the glory of God, it is more easy to persuade, that there neither is, nor ever was any such glory, of which they had any hopes or possibility. Thirdly, the stronger also are these temptations to unbelief, because man is now so mastered by his sense, and hath so much weakened his reason by subjugating it to his flesh, that he is hardly drawn to look higher than sense can reach. Because we see not God, or Christ, or heaven, or hell, we are apt naturally to question whether they have indeed any being, and to say as Thomas, “Except I may see or feel, I will not believe ;” yea, men are ready to doubt of the very being of their souls, which is themselves, and which is that which doubteth, because they cannot see the soul. Fourthly, especially these temptations to infidelity are the stronger in that man’s soul in its corrupted state is disposed to believe Satan, and not to believe God ; for as this was his first sin, so was the

soul thereby habituated according to that act, further than God hath done any thing to cure and remedy it. Though we must needs know that God is more to be credited than the devil, in general, yet when it comes to particulars he is so far above us, and the breakings forth of his light and truth are so strange to us, and also we are conscious that we are fallen under some enmity to him, and therefore are the more apt to suspect what he saith and doth; and his ways are all so cross to our corrupt conceits and interests, and the persuasions of Satan so suitable to both, that it is no wonder if we are more ready to believe the tempter than God. Fifthly, and yet stronger are these temptations to infidelity, because of the subtilty of the tempter, and the many devices that he hath to overwit us, and his importunity and violence in driving them on; which if we should mention particularly, would be the matter of a volume. And is it not a great mercy for a soul that is thus assaulted, to have the witness in himself; and so great a help against the power of these temptations?

Sect. X.

But, it is like, some will here say; 'I know it is a great mercy to have such witness in ourselves, but I find not any such witness in me: I inquire into my own soul, and I can perceive no such matter: I hear talk of the Spirit dwelling in us, and that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his: but, yet, I cannot find that Spirit in myself.'

Ans. As for those that have not this Spirit, no wonder if they find it not: but, if, indeed, thou be one that hast it, I would ask thee these few questions, and desire thee to give a deliberate answer, before thou concludest that thou hast not the Spirit.

Quest. 1. Do you not, in your inquiry into your hearts, expect to hear or feel some effective, persuading witness of the Spirit, besides the holy changes of its sanctifying work upon you; yea, perhaps without any reference to that sanctifying work at all. If you do, for ought I know, you look for that which you have no reason to expect, much less, to depend upon as the only witness. The Spirit's holy changes upon your heart, are a standing, objective testimony, which you ought to improve to your own consolation; and it is your exciter and helper in that improvement: but, if you will expect a voice or witness within you, to tell you the same things by immediate

revelation, and not to deduce them from that permanent testimony, I shall not marvel if you miss of your expectations.

Quest. 2. Do you not mistake the matter of this inward testimony, as if it were more to be sought in some other sort of changes by the Spirit, than in that renovation of the soul, and implantation of God's image. If you think that the witness of the Spirit lieth in higher notions, or raptures, or ecstasies of the mind, or in sudden inspirations, or extraordinary gifts, which were common in the first age; no wonder, then, if you find not the witness: that witness you may find without you, in the apostles and first churches, when it was purposely given as a public seal to the public testimony, which they gave of Christ; but I cannot encourage you to expect that within yourselves. As the doctrine of the apostles was to be delivered down in writing, for the use of the church to the end of the world, so was the seal of their extraordinary gifts to be annexed, for the like public use of the church, to the confirmation of that doctrine: and, so, both their doctrine and their gifts were not for themselves, or for that age alone, but for all us that do succeed: but this being not the case of their successors, what wonder, if their successors have none of those gifts.

Quest. 3. Do you not ascribe all the workings of the Spirit in you, to yourselves, and say; 'This is but the work of mine own reason, or conscience, or voluntary endeavours, and not of the Spirit of God.' If you do thus, no wonder, if you have the Spirit, and overlook it. If you will needs divide what God hath joined together, and say; 'This is the work of reason, conscience, or my own will, therefore not of the Spirit:' you do but use the Spirit's witness against the honour of the Spirit, and against yourselves. You should argue contrarily; thus: 'My reason, conscience, or will, would never have moved thus, or been thus disposed, if the Spirit of Christ had not thus disposed and moved them, and taken off their contrary inclinations; therefore, even this inclination and operation of my own reason, conscience, and will, is the true effect of the Spirit, and the standing witness of Christ and his Gospel in my soul;' for the Spirit worketh on us, and so by us. Where is it that the Spirit giveth light, but into our own understandings; and, how perceive we that light, but by the rational apprehensions and discourses of those understandings. Have we any other faculty or means of perceiving them? How doth the Spirit assure us of any thing, but by giving in some evidence of it to our

understandings; or causing us more clearly to discern that evidence which we discerned not all, or but obscurely before. It is, therefore, to and with our consciences, that the Spirit doth witness, and not without them. The like, we may say, of his work upon the will; when he exciteth it, he causeth it to excite itself. All faculties would lie dead, or more disorderly, if the Spirit did not set them in joint, and guide them in their work: their orderly right motions, therefore, being the effects of the Spirit, are this testimony of the Spirit within us, which we speak of.

Quest. 4. Do you not overvalue your natural corrupted faculties, and think they may go further than indeed they can? If when the Spirit doth set your souls in frame, and elevate them to God, and take off their earthly or sensual dispositions, you will then persuade yourselves that nature doth all this of itself, and that it is but the operations of unsanctified reason, what wonder then, if you overlook the Spirit? This is one danger of having too mean thoughts of our depravedness, and too high thoughts of our natural abilities, lest it draw men to rob the Spirit of his honour, and say, that corrupt nature hath done those works which were done by the Holy Ghost. I will not say, that they who ascribe the sanctifying works of the Spirit to depraved nature, are guilty of that blasphemy, as they are which ascribed his miraculous works to Beelzebub; but it looks so much that way, that we should the more carefully avoid it. Let those take heed of this, that are ready to say, 'That no men have the Spirit, and all that pretend to it, are deluded by the strength of their own imaginations, and mere teaching, education, and industry, may produce all those effects, which we ascribe to the Holy Ghost.' I say, let these men take heed, lest they run too near to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, before they are aware.

Quest. 5. Do you not forget the state that once you were in, and the great change which the Spirit did then make upon you, and because you feel not such further alterations proportionable to that first, you conclude that you have not the Spirit at all? I am sure this is a very common case: as the forgetting of the miserable state we were in, in the late wars, doth make us undervalue our present peace, which then we would have accounted an excellent mercy; so doth the forgetting of our wicked dispositions, and conversations in our state of unregeneracy, make us undervalue our present state of grace. We have lived since

that first change, without any more changes so great, and notable as that was, and therefore we have forgotten what once we were, and live as if God had never changed us as to the comfortable apprehensions of the mercy. But cannot you remember, when it was much otherwise with you; and that once God made a great alteration on you? And doth it not still remain? Remember how little savour you had once of the things of the Spirit; how little mind to Christ, or holiness; how wholly you were given up to the pleasures of the flesh, or the profits of the world, and what a mastery your lusts had over you? Was it not a work of power, and love, and wisdom, and holiness, and therefore a work of the Spirit of Christ, by which all this is altered in you, and you are not now the persons that you were? Who else could have so changed your minds and ways?

Quest. 6. Do you not look for a greater measure of this testimony, and the comfortable effects of it, than you have reason to expect on earth? Or, at least, till you have done more in attending the conduct of grace, and in resisting and conquering the enemies of your peace? And do you not thereupon conclude, that you have not the Spirit, because you have not so great a measure of the Spirit, as you expect? There is a great difference between having not the Spirit, and not having so much of the Spirit.

Quest. 7. If none of these be your case, then diligently inquire whether you have not wronged and grieved the Spirit, and by some stubborn untractableness, or wilful disobedience and yielding to your lusts, occasioned the Spirit to leave you in the dark, and so far to withdraw his operations and manifestations of himself, as to let you feel more of your lusts than of his graces, and to doubt whether you have the Spirit within you or not?

These questions I would have those Christians considerately to answer, that have the witness in themselves, but know not that they have it.

Sect. XI.

Obj. But we see so many pretend to the Spirit that are conceited of their own opinions and ways, and some of them on that pretence, maintaining the vilest doctrines and practices, and the more heretical or mad they are, the more strongly and confidently do they pretend to have the Spirit, that we cannot

believe that any have it at all: for the one are as confident of the Spirit, as the other.

Answ. 1. The conclusion of this objection is unjust and unreasonable: unjust, for it condemneth one man for the fault and folly of another, and takes one man to have an ill title because another man's evidences are nought. If two men shall have a cause before you as their judge, about a title to lands or goods, and you find the plaintiff to be a deceiver, and his title bad, will you say to the defendant, 'Thy title is bad too, because he was as confident that his was good as thou art of thine?' And it is unreasonable, too, not only to judge of one man's pretences by another's, but to judge his pretences to be false who evidenceth at least the probability of their truth, because another man's are false, who manifesteth their falsehood. Suppose you discourse with a wise man and a fool or madman; and the one is as confident that he is a wise man, as the other; will you, therefore, judge that neither of them are wise, when you hear the words of wisdom from the one as you do the words of folly from the other? If you have two neighbours who would both be taken for honest men; and one lives honestly, and the other dishonestly; will you conclude, that neither of them are honest because both are not? So is it here. Some men pretend to a spirit of holiness and heavenliness, and withal do live holy and heavenly lives; others boast more confidently of the same spirit, while they hate the doctrines and ways of holiness, and maintain the most impure opinions and practices: will you judge, that either both these must have the Spirit which they pretend to, or neither? One showeth you his faith by his works, and the spirit within him by the fruits of the Spirit, while the other shows you his delusion or dissimulation, by the fruits of the flesh.

2. It is the ordinary way of the deceiving spirit, to do his works by an apish imitation of the Spirit of Christ. His chief means to resist Moses, and harden the Egyptians in their unbelief, was by imitating him as far as he could in his wonders, that the Egyptians might say, 'Our magicians can do this as well as you;' and so might think that the cause was equal, by the effects, till God showed that he permitted them but for a fuller discovery of his power in vanquishing them. About the time that Christ came in the flesh, the devil stirred up many false Christs, to seduce the poor Jews, that while they said 'Lo here is Christ, and lo there,' he might be the less regarded; and by raising up many to lay claim to the same dignity, Christ's own claim might be

the more questionable in the eyes of the world. When the apostles went out with a spirit of power and wonders, to convince the world of the doctrine of Christ, the chief resistance they had was by the imitating spirit, who would do wonders too. Simon Magus was the head of the heretics, who would contend against the apostles by his wonders, till he was vanquished by the Spirit of Christ : his successors, Menander, Ebion, Cerinthus, Valentinus, Basilides, Carpocrates, and Marcion, with their sects, were animated by magical works. By the same way did the pagan Apollonius resist the truth, more successfully than he could do by his philosophical disputations : the same course doth Satan take in our times. He raiseth up heretical, impious men to boast of the Spirit, and cry up 'The Spirit,' 'The Spirit,' that thereby he may disgrace the Spirit, and make men believe that all pretences to the Spirit are as false as theirs : he stirs up the quakers, ranters, and others that pretend to communion with angels, appearing to them in visible shapes, that by seeming to be acted by an extrinsic power, by their motions, frenzies, ecstasies, and strange speeches, he may draw men to question whether the Spirit of the apostles and Christians of old were not some such diabolical possession or deceit. This being the known and ordinary artifice of the deceiver, to seek by an imitation of the Spirit of Christ, to shake men's faith, and make them believe that it is the same Spirit that causeth the one and the other : we have little reason to be shaken by such palpable and old deceits.

Sect. XII.

Quest. But when so many pretend to the Spirit, how shall we know which of them it is that are deceived, and who hath the Spirit indeed, and who not ?

Answ. I will first lay you down some negative rules, to show you which is not the Spirit of Christ ; and then I shall direct you to discern it in yourselves.

1. That spirit which opposeth God, or his nature and attributes, is not the Spirit of Christ : for it is the office of Christ to lead men to God, and for the honour of his Father did he come into the world. Justin Martyr saith, in 'Dialog. cum Tryphon,' "That he would not have believed Christ himself, if he had spoken against the Father." I am sure we have reason to believe that it is not Christ, nor his Spirit, that shall speak against him. Whatever spirit denieth the infiniteness, immor-

tality, incomprehensibility, omnipotency, wisdom, or goodness of God, his holiness, faithfulness, truth, justice, or mercy, it is certain that spirit is not of Christ. For Christ is one with the Father as God, and the way to him as Mediator; and therefore cannot be the author of any blasphemy against him in his attributes.

2. Whatever spirit contradicteth the evident light and law of nature, is not the Spirit of Christ: for Christ came to repair and perfect nature; and all truth is God's truth; and the light and law of nature is his light and law.

3. Whatever spirit shall contradict the Holy Scriptures, is certainly none of the Spirit of Christ: for Christ is the author of Scripture, and confuted Satan himself by its authority; and Christ is not divided, nor against himself. The Spirit of God is not against the word of God; for God is not a contradicter of himself, because he cannot lie. We may well, therefore, try the spirits of our times, by the word which before our times was sealed by the Spirit. All the spirits of this age that contradict any doctrine delivered in the Scriptures, are certainly spirits that contradict Christ's Spirit, and therefore are deceivers, whatsoever they may pretend.

4. Every spirit that is against holiness and purity of life, is a spirit of uncleanness, and not of Christ: for Christ's Spirit is eminently a sanctifying Spirit, sent by him from the Father to make us holy as he is holy.

5. Every spirit that is against order, and is a friend to confusion, is against Christ, and is none of the Spirit of Christ. For God is not the God of confusion, but of peace, and commandeth that all things be done in order. (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) And hath established an order among angels, men, brutes, and inanimates, yea, some among the devils themselves. God hath set in his church, some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the body. (Ephes. iv. 11, 12.) And he hath appointed rulers under him in the commonwealth, and made it one of his Ten Commandments, that we shall honour our parents, and so our rulers; and made authority of parents a natural result. Those, therefore, that would level the powers in church or state, that God hath set up, and despise dominion and authority, which he hath commanded us to obey, are certainly possessed with an antichristian spirit, which is far unlike to the Spirit of Christ.

Sect. XIII.

Quest. But how then shall I know that I have the Spirit of Christ?

Answ. By the nature of its effects. 1. The Spirit of Christ doth renew the soul to God's image. And one of God's attributes is to be the living God. His being is the ground of the rest. The Spirit of Christ is no fancy, dream, or delusion, nor worketh an imaginary change on the soul, but a real change, making the soul alive that was dead in sin, and becomes a principle of life within us. To be really alive to God, and dead to the world, is the certain effect of the Spirit of God. Would you know whether a godly man be alive or dead; observe him in his desires and endeavours after God, and there you shall see by his action, and earnestness, that he is alive. But if you would try whether a carnal man be alive or dead, you must see by his desires and endeavours for the flesh, that he is alive; for by any that he hath after God, you cannot see it.

2. As wisdom is one of the attributes of God, so is the Spirit of Christ, a Spirit of wisdom. He teacheth men to know God from the creature, heaven from earth, holiness from sin; and what to choose, and what to refuse. He acquainteth them with duty and danger, and the reward that is before them: he maketh them wise to do good, to discern the methods and wiles of the devil, and escape them, and to manage their christian conversation in the world. Even those that are simple in worldly matters are thus far made wise by the Spirit of Christ; without great wisdom, there is no escaping the snares of the deceiver, and getting safe to heaven. By this holy wisdom, which is foolishness in the eyes of worldly men, you may discern that you have the Spirit of Christ.

3. As God is holy, so is Christ's Spirit a Spirit of holiness, and given us on purpose for the destroying of our sins, the resisting and conquering the desires of the flesh, the healing of our diseases, the implanting the graces of God in our souls, and working our hearts and lives to an obedience to his will. If you have this Spirit, it striveth against the flesh; (Gal. v. 17;) and it inclineth your hearts to the things above, and is still mortifying your lusts, and bringing you nearer God. It is the business of this Spirit to bring back the creature to God, whom we did forsake; and, therefore, it must give us more of the knowledge of him, and love to him, and confidence in him, and make us more

zealously devoted to his will. The spirit, therefore, that is impure, and encourageth men in sin, and cries up carnal liberty, and draweth not the heart to God, but from him, is certainly none of the Spirit of Christ. By this many carnal pretenders of our times may be convicted.

4. As God is love, so is Christ's Spirit a Spirit of love, by which we are taught to love God, and our brother, yea, and our very enemy: and so to dwell in God, by dwelling in love, and God also dwelleth in us. (1 John iv. 10—16.) "They that learn of Christ, are meek and lowly." (Matt. xi. 28, 29.) "They that keep his commandments do love one another." (John xv. 17.) "The wisdom from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits." (Jam. iii. 17, 18.) "They are taught of God, by this Spirit within them, to love one another." (1 Thess. iv. 9.) The most of the heretical spirits of these times do hereby show that they are not of Christ; their very religion lieth in railing at ministers, and reproaching those that are not of their way, and bearing down all that resist their designs; by how much injustice or unmercifulness, they do not much regard. How full are all places of the effects of this spirit? Men's selfishness, and cruelty, and envious zeal, and spleen against their brethren that are not of their minds, doth tell us that too many among us do little know what spirit they are of.

5. As God is almighty, so is Christ's Spirit a Spirit of power: though it will not do all that it can, yet it will do that which none else can do: though it do not here perfect us, nor subdue our sins absolutely, yet doth it make us conquerors, and more. (Rom. viii. 37.) It rooteth up the strongest and deep rooted lusts; it prevaieth against prejudice, custom, and nature; it conquereth corrupted sensuality, and keepeth the ordered senses in subjection; it mastereth the nearest interest of the flesh, and self; and the highest interest of the greatest on earth, or of our nearest carnal friends, that do oppose it; it levelleth high imaginations, and taketh down all within us, which exalteth itself against God. (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.) If the Spirit in the word be thus mighty and powerful in making the first change on a carnal heart, how much more easily may we see that it must be so with the Spirit in the soul, which it hath possessed. This Spirit doth not only strive against sin, but conquer it, nor suffer a man to spend his days in fruitless resistances, but doth give sin its death wound; so that in whomsoever this abideth, sin shall

not have dominion over him. (Rom.vi. 14.) You see, then, how you may know that you have this Spirit.

Sect. XIV.

If all true believers have the witness in themselves, then it follows, that when Satan would tempt them to infidelity, they should not only have recourse to their Bibles, but also to their hearts. Here, therefore, I come to the second part of the application before promised, to show you what use we should make of this testimony, and how to improve it, for the confirmation of our faith. O what an excellent help is here, that the poorest Christian hath against such temptation, beyond all the furniture of the most learned that want it! This advantage will furnish us both against temptations to infidelity in general, and against temptations to any error that is plainly contrary to the essentials of Christianity.

1. If the devil, or any seducer, would draw you to doubt, whether there be indeed a Christ or not, and whether he did rise again, and be now living, what an excellent advantage is it against this temptation, when you can repair to your own hearts, and there find a Christ within you, I mean, his Spirit possessing you, and ruling you for him; and his very nature and image in you, and such workings of his upon you, which none can imitate. O, saith the sanctified soul, have I felt Christ relieving me in my lost condition, binding up my broken heart, delivering me from my captivity, reconciling me to God, and bringing me with boldness into his presence, whom I had offended, and saving me from God's wrath, and law, and my own conscience; and now, after all this, shall I doubt whether there be a Christ, or whether he be alive! Have I felt him new creating me, and making all things new to me, so strangely opening my darkened eyes, and bringing me from darkness into his marvellous light, and from the power of Satan to God; binding the strong man, and casting him out, and bringing down the strongest holds in my soul; and yet shall I question, whether there be a Christ or not? Hath he made me love the things which I hated, and hate that which I loved? Hath he given me such a taste of the powers of the world to come, and possessed me with the hopes of glory with himself, and given me a treasure and portion in God, and set my heart where my treasure is, and caused me in some measure to have my conversation in heaven; and yet shall I doubt again, whether

he be the Christ? What an impudent spirit is it that would tempt me against so much experience? As Athanasius saith to the heathens in his time, "If Christ be not alive, how doth he yet destroy your idols, and cast out devils, and convert, and subdue the world to himself. Are these the works of a dead man?" Though you see him not, yet by these you may see that he yet liveth; so may the true Christian say, Is it the work of a dead man to make me alive? To bring such a clod so near to heaven? To set up a new kingdom, and laws within me? Sure, he that did all this in me, is alive. He that every day helps me to pray, and hears my prayers, and plainly shows me in the accomplishment that they are heard, he is not dead but alive; or else I should not have these benefits of his life. Because he lives, therefore do I live also, and therefore am I in hope of living with him for ever; whereas, if he were dead, my hopes would die, and justice would have caused me to die ere now. My very life confirms me, that there is a Christ, to keep off the penalty which justice would else inflict. It is because God is merciful to me in his beloved, and pleased in him, in whom he was well pleased; and because in him his compassions fail not, therefore it is that I am not consumed. Thus may a true believer argue, from the testimony that is within him, against this temptation.

If deceiving infidels get abroad among us, and seek to turn men from the faith of Christ, they may prevail with those that gave Christ no deeper room, than in their fantasy, and that never did heartily close with him in love. If you out-reason these men, yea, if you can turn the scale of fleshly interest to be against the profession of Christ, they will be easily drawn to let him go; but for those that have the Spirit of Christ within them, it is not so with them? If they cannot answer the cavils of an infidel, yet they can hold fast the ground of faith. Christ hath deeper room and interest in them. He is held faster by the heart than by the head alone. Love will hold Christ when reason alone would let him go. If you will draw such a soul as this to infidelity you must draw him out of the arms and embracement of Christ. His ear is, as it were, nailed to his door: because he loveth him, he will not leave him. If a sinner will the hardlier leave his lusts, or worldly profits, because he loveth them, blame not a Christian, if he be loth to leave Christ, who hath so loved his soul, and whom his soul so loveth. "Who shall separate him from the love of Christ? Shall tribu-

lation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 35—39.) See here how fast that lively faith, which works by love, doth hold the Lord Jesus Christ! Though a superficial bare assent may let him go. I know expositors agree not about the sense of the words, 'the love of Christ.' Calvin, Beza, Martyr, Pareus, Par, &c. do take it as spoken of Christ's love to us, and not of our love to Christ. Piscator takes it for the sense or feeling of Christ's love to us. Ambrose, Augustine, and others of the ancients, understand it, of our love to Christ. Our English annotations say it may be taken for either, but rather for 'our love to Christ.' The Pelagian expositors are glad of the seeming advantage that ours, before-mentioned, do give them, in expounding it of 'God's love to us,' and not 'of ours to him;' and thereupon infer that it is God's love in Christ, to those that love him, that is here meant; (ver. 28;) as if he should say, 'What can cause Christ to cease loving those that love him?' But then say they, 'Here is nothing to deny that we may be drawn from loving Christ, and so from being the objects of his forementioned love; and therefore they note that sin is not here enumerated among the rest of the causes. Erasmus and Deodate take in both, supposing it to speak both of our love to Christ, and Christ's love to us, which I conceive to be the soundest exposition; but, most nearly, I conceive it speaks of our love to Christ, but ultimately, and principally of the love of God in Christ to us: for, first, none could reasonably imagine that our tribulation, distress, famine, nakedness, &c. should be so many assaults on God to draw him from loving us, but rather assaults on us to draw us from loving God; nor can it be imaginable that angels, principalities, powers, things present, or to come, should be thought by any to have any considerable strength for the overcoming or expunging of God's love to us, while we love him; and therefore it were no great glory for the apostle thus triumphantly to say, he was persuaded of that which no man doubts of, that God cannot be overcome, or moved from his love,

by the extrinsic opposing powers of the creatures. Secondly, it is said that 'in all these things we are more than conquerors.' It is not said God is conqueror. It is we, therefore, that were assaulted, and not Christ: it was we, therefore, that were drawn by these enumerated trials, to have relinquished our love to Christ, and not Christ that was tempted by them to relinquish his love to us: and I am loth, with Piscator and some others, to take it for the feeling of Christ's love to us, because, first, many Christians are drawn from the feeling of his love. Secondly, and then it would not be true of all Christians universally, but of some eminent champions that are strong in the faith. And the word 'separate' shows that it is spoken, both of us and Christ, and that it is not so much of the sense of love, as of the love itself. I take the apostle's meaning, therefore, to be, as if he should say, 'What can unclasp those mutual embracements, between Christ and his people? Or what can separate us from Christ, by withdrawing or destroying our love to him, and consequently turning his love from us? We have many assaults, but all in vain.' And if our love to Christ be thus secured, then is the saint's perseverance sure; but if his love to those that love him be firm, and not our love to him; then if we cease loving him, he would cease to love us, and be unreconciled to us, as he was before our believing. It is the embracements of a mutual love that is here meant, as I suppose. Christ hath hold of the believer in the arms of his love; and by an answerable love, though infinitely weaker, the believer also hath hold on Christ. Who now can separate them that are thus closed in these embracements? The first reason of the stability of the love of the saints, doth lie in the stability of the love of Christ. We love him, because he loved us first; and he loveth us with a further love of complacency, because we love him; and we persevere in loving him, because his love to us doth persevere. It is not easy to draw a truly-loving believer from the arms of his beloved. He remembereth that love of his first espousals, how Christ took him up, and washed him from his blood, and spake peace to his wounded self-condemning soul. He remembereth the straits he brought him out of, and the misery which he rescued him from. O, what should I have done, thinks he, if I had not had a Christ: what should I have done in my fears and griefs: what should have I said to an accusing conscience: how should I have escaped the jaws of the devourer: how should I have lived one day in peace upon earth, when

God had once made known to me my condition ! He remembereth also the frequent refreshings, which he hath had from the Spirit and grace of Christ ; the assistances in duty, the conquests which by him have been obtained against the enemy : and all these reviews do renew his love ; and with such thoughts and remembrances as these in his mind, and with such a sacred fire of love in his heart, how excellently is he fortified against temptations to unbelief ! This love is strong, and the waters of many temptations cannot quench it : if the tempter would give him the substance of, worldly goods and riches, yea, all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, to draw the soul from Christ, they would be despised. A bare belief is only in the head, which is but the entrance into the inwards of the soul : but when Christ hath our love, he is in the castle of the heart ; and then the word hath rooting in us ; and therefore in time of trial we shall stand. Love is accompanied with hope and desire, so far as we want the thing we love ; and it is not easy to take a man off from his strongest desires, and highest hopes. Love is always accompanied with delight, so far as we enjoy the thing we love, and know that we do enjoy it ; and a fruition in taste and earnest we have of Christ in this life. And it is, then, no wonder if the tempter have a hard task of it, to draw the soul from him, whom he is delighted in. Worldly men will not let go their vanities ; no, nor children their toys ; no, nor foolish wretches their foulest sins ; because they do delight in them. No wonder, then, if the sons of wisdom, the members of Christ, and children of the kingdom, do hold fast their delights. Did not faith work by this love, desire, delight, and hope, it would be dead, being alone, as to this resisting of temptations.

These are the ways in which it putteth forth its strength. These are the arms by which it holdeth fast the Lord. Every grace is employed in its own place, for the entertainment of Christ, and the retaining him with us. They all sit together, do compose that spiritual frame or furniture, which makes us convenient habitations for the Spirit. He, therefore, that hath this nature, these affections, and these experiences accompanying his belief, may well make Paul's challenge, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ ?" O, thou malicious devil, that dost haunt me with thy darts ! O, you deluded heretics and infidels, that fill my ears with your foolish sophisms, and trouble me with your disputes against the Lord, my Redeemer ! Go to them that know him only by the hearing of the ear, if you

mean to prevail: but I have known him by the sweet experiences of my soul. Go to them that make a religion of their opinions, and whose belief was never any deeper than their fancies, and whose piety never reached any higher than to certain abstinency and negatives, and to tasks of formal duty; these you may possibly draw away from Christ, and make infidels of them, that were never true believers. Go to them that never knew what it was to love Christ, nor to desire after him, nor to delight in his salvation, nor to hope for his promised blessedness hereafter; but have been only the shells or shadows of believers, annumerating themselves with the strictest professors, while they were strangers to their new natures, and inward frame of mind. It is like you may prevail with these, by subtle seducement, or allurements, or threats; but do you think to do so by me? Why, what weapons, what arguments, do you think to prevail by? Shall tribulation be the means? why, I have that promise in the hand of my faith, and that glory in the eye of my hope, that will bring me through tribulation. Shall distress do it? why, I will rather stick so much the closer to him that will relieve me in distresses, and bring me unto his rest. Will you affright me by persecution? I am assured that this is the nearest way to heaven, and I am blessed of Christ, when persecuted for righteousness. Shall nakedness be the weapon? I had rather pass naked out of this world to heaven, than be clothed in purple, and be stripped of it at death, and cast into hell. Adam's innocent nakedness, and Lazarus's rags, were better than that epicure's gay apparel. (Luke 16.) Shall famine be the means? Why, man liveth not by bread only; I had rather my body famished, than my soul. I have meat to eat that ye know not of; even the bread of life, which whoso eats shall live for ever. If I eat and drink with you, I must hunger and thirst again; but this living water will spring up within me to everlasting life, and then I shall thirst or hunger no more. Will you affright me from Christ, by the sword of violence? I know that the Lord, whom I believe in, and serve, is able to deliver me out of your hands; but if he will not, be it known to you, I will not forsake him: for your sword shall be but the key to open the prison doors, and let out my soul, that hath long desired to be with Christ. If you tell me of peril, I know no danger so great, as of losing Christ and salvation, and bearing his wrath that can kill both body and soul in hell. Do I not read in certain history of

that noble army of martyrs that loved the Lord Jesus to the death, and gloried in tribulation, and would not by the flames, or jaws of lions, be separated from Christ? Did not they pass through that Red Sea, as on dry ground to the promised land.

Was not the Son of God in the flames with them, to strengthen and support them? Though they were killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep to the slaughter, yet did they not forsake the Captain of their Salvation; who was made perfect by suffering, and gave them an example: nay, in all this they were triumphing conquerors; they triumphed in the flames, to the confusion of Satan and all their enemies, as Christ triumphed on the cross, destroying by death the prince of death. (Heb. ii. 14.) Through him that loved them to the death, they were enabled to love him to the death. I am confident that all your assaults will be vain, by which you would separate me from the love of God, in Christ. If you would do it by the threats of death, I will remember it will prove the passage to life, and that Christ doth threaten everlasting death. If you would do it by the baits of life, I will prefer the everlasting life before it. If evil angels assault me, as thinking themselves too strong for me, they will find that I am preserved by a stronger than they. Were it possible for a good angel to dissuade me from my Lord, and to preach to me another Gospel, as he would cease to be good, so I would hold him accursed.

Principalities, aerial or terrestrial, cannot overtop the Divine and Sovereign Lord of the redeemed. Powers, aerial or terrestrial, will never overpower him. Present hopes, or fears, or enjoyments, are transitory and contemptible. Future evils will soon be past; and all future things are as ineffectual as the present. The height of honours would not entice; the depths of distresses would not discourage. No power, from the highest to the lowest of creatures; no state, from the highest to the lowest of conditions, shall separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord; either from the love wherewith through Christ I love him, or the love wherewith he loveth me through Christ.

Thus may the confirmed, experienced believer be confident, that the bands and cords of love will never by fraud or force be untwisted; and that none shall take them out of the Father's hands, who is greater than all; and, therefore, none shall take them out of the hands of Christ; and that no persecution shall cause that faith to wither, which in a good and honest heart hath taken root.

And thus you see what an advantage it is against temptation to infidelity, to have the impress of the Gospel of Christ on our hearts, and the witness in ourselves.

Sect. XV.

2. So if the tempter should persuade such a man to doubt whether the Gospel be true, or be God's word, this believer may have recourse into his soul for a testimony of it; thence he can tell the tempter, by experience, that he hath found the promises of this Gospel made good to him. 'Christ hath there promised to send his Spirit into the souls of his people, and so he hath done by me; he hath promised to give light to them that sit in darkness, and to guide their feet into the ways of peace; to bind up the broken-hearted, and set at liberty the captives; and all this he hath fulfilled upon me: all that he hath spoken about the power of his word and grace, and the nature of its effects, I have found upon myself. The help which he promised in temptations, the hearing of prayers, the relief in distress; all these I have found performed; and, therefore, I know that the Gospel is true.'

3. If the tempter would persuade you that there was no need of a Redeemer, the believer hath a testimony of the contrary in himself. Experimentally he hath been convinced of the need of a Redeemer, and so hath advantage against this temptation.

4. If the tempter would persuade you that Christ came but to seek himself, and only to be believed on, and magnified in the world, here also the true believer hath the witness in himself, from whence he can conclude, and prove, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, to be a physician to the sick, to seek and to save that which was lost, and to pull down the kingdom and powers of darkness: for of all these he hath experience in himself, and from hence may sufficiently repel this temptation.

5. If any should question whether there be, indeed, such a thing as a sanctifying Spirit of Christ sent forth into the souls of believers, to recover them to God (as many carnal persons, and deceivers of late, do,) the true believer may have recourse to his own heart, and prove the thing by the testimony within him. He can think of the sins that this Spirit hath mortified, and of the heavenly image which it hath planted on his soul, and the discoveries and changes which it hath made within him, which flesh and blood could not have made, and thus can experimentally confute such deceivers.

Thus you may perceive, that it is the duty of the saints to fetch arguments from within them, for the repelling of such temptations, and the confutation of all suggestions to unbelief: and here, if ever, to show ourselves instructed to the kingdom of God, by fetching out of our treasure things new and old. If the wiser heathens, yea, almost all the pagan world, could gather that there was some life for us after this, from those small sparks of virtue which they found in man's nature, how much more easily and solidly may we conclude, both this and much more, from the spiritual principles, inclinations, and actions, which are wrought on the souls of the sanctified, by the grace of Christ, and the power of the Gospel? Doubtless, there is something within a true Christian that takes part with Christ against all contradictors, as there was something in the new-created man, Adam, that would have taken part with God, if any had denied the Godhead: yea, and as there is something yet in the common sort of mankind, that would make them rise up against him that should be a professed atheist. Do not tempt God, upon confidence of this, by thrusting yourselves into the mouth of temptation, or lending your ears to heretical deceivers or infidels; but if you are cast upon such temptations, make use of this antidote, and observe whether there be not somewhat within you, that contradicteth the seducer, and riseth up against the blasphemies which are suggested? If a child should be persuaded to think ill of his own father, whatever arguments were brought to persuade him, the very natural love of a child would contradict them, and much advantage him against any slanderous reports that might be raised of him. Another man that neither so well knoweth him, or loveth him, would be far more easily drawn to believe them; but there is somewhat within him that will not let a child believe them so easily. If a deceiver should say to him, 'This man is not thy father, and hath nothing to do with thee; he meaneth but to undo thee, and desireth not thy good,' would not something within, even natural love, and experience of his father's kindness, establish a son from crediting such a deceiver? Believers have an inward rooted love to Christ. They love him above father, mother, house, land, or their own lives. They have tasted also and tried how good he is: and is it easy to break these bonds, and make such an one believe that the Gospel is false, or that Christ is not indeed the Messiah? When Christ standeth without, and knocks at the door of men's hearts, he then pleadeth but his

right for admittance, and though his arguments be very cogent with evidence, and he fully proveth all that he saith, yet it is less wonder that he is kept out by unbelief, because, though he have the right, yet his enemy hath the possession. But in a true believer, Christ hath possession, as well as right: and, therefore, it will be harder for the enemy to dispossess him, by drawing that soul again to infidelity. His Spirit keeps possession; his graces all keep possession; his precepts and promises also without, do hold them to their allegiance. His threatenings awe them, and are as a wall of fire before them, and they have their eyes opened to see the angel with the sword. He telleth them, that if any man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him. (Heb. x. 38.) That it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. (Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.) I see no necessity that this must be understood of the unregenerate and unjustified; yet doth it not affirm, that eventually any sanctified, justified person shall come into this sad condition, but it warneth them that they do not, and telleth them the danger, that hereby it may be prevented: for Christ causeth his people's perseverance, by telling them of the possibility, facility, and danger, in itself, of not persevering. So that all these advantages do fortify a true believer against infidelity: but especially in that the precepts, and promises, and threatenings of Christ's law, are all written over again in his heart: these are they that hold fast. A precept, and promise, and threatening in the Bible, may do much; but when a true Christian is tempted to unbelief, he can say, 'There is a precept to the contrary written in my heart: there is a threatening against infidelity written in my heart: there is a promise to believers written in my heart. How then can I do this great evil: and sin against the law that is within me: and the Lord that doth possess me?

You see, then, what hope the devil hath to speed by such temptations, and where it is, that the upstart generation of cunning infidels in this age, here in England, must seek their prey, and find matter to make unhappy proselytes of; not among the experienced, well-grounded, renewed, and truly regenerate ones, that have a Christ in their hearts, as well as

his name in their books, but among those that are merely nominal, titular, traditional and superficial Christians : of such as these is their apostatized party composed.

Obj. But some that have seemed as godly and experienced Christians as the best, have of late fallen to deny Christ and everlasting life.

Answ. 1. All seemers have not the witness in themselves, nor the law of Christ put into their hearts.

2. I hope some of those that deny the fundamentals opiniatively and speculatively, may hold them virtually and practically ; and that their infidelity is not yet rooted or habituated, nor hath extirpated the better habits which were in them, though it have so far prevailed with their fantasies, opinions, and tongues.

3. If it were proved that some true believers do apostatize unto perdition, yet would the doctrine which we are upon remain unshaken, that it is a great advantage against temptations to unbelief, to have the witness in ourselves.

Sect. XVI.

Obj. May not a Turk or a pagan say the like, that there is something within them that dissuadeth them from a change ; and resisteth all motions that would draw them from their religion ? That is, there is prejudice, through education, custom, company, and interests, and prepossession ; and there is a kind of love to their own idols, and conceits hereupon. And what is yours more than this ?

Answ. My answer consisteth of two parts, which I desire you to observe together. 1. It is easy to possess men with prejudice, and with love, and friendship, to a false teacher, false religion, or way, which hath nothing in nature against it, but for it ; but it is not easy to possess men with the like persuasions and affections to that which nature is not for but against. If Mahomet will promise men dominion on earth, and sensual felicity after that they are dead, and make a sensual life to be the way to it, what wonder if nature be easily drawn to this religion ? Here is much in carnal hearts to befriend it, but little to gainsay it. But if Christ call men from all their pleasing sins, and instead of satisfying their flesh do require them to take it as their enemy, and to crucify it ; and instead of making them great in the world, do call them to leave all, and deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow him, if

they will be his disciples; and setteth men upon high and spiritual employments, and all in hope of a reward, which is unseen: here flesh and blood will resist; carnal nature will rise up against it; this will not easily down, till more than human strength effect it; so that you may see the case is so different between the christian religion and others, that it will no way follow, that we may love Christ without a supernatural work, because a man may love Mahomet without it.

2. And further note, that we do make a great difference among Christians themselves, between those that believe and love Christ merely upon such prejudice, custom, or interest; and those that believe in him, and love him sincerely, and upon right grounds. And we confess, that those of the former, being but superficial and seeming Christians, may be drawn away to infidelity: but what is that to their case, that have a true faith and love? There is a double difference between these and the other: one in the object of their faith and love, and another in the act. For, first, it is but the cheap and easy part of the christian religion, which those customary professors do indeed entertain in love; and so they love Christ but as the author of these: and so they make another thing of christian religion in their conceits, than indeed it is; and it is not indeed that religion which they embrace or love, but the name of it, and some parcels torn from the rest; but it is not so with the sincere: and then, secondly, it is but a superficial, dreaming, ineffectual belief, that they receive the very history of the rest; and therefore not accepted by a sovereign love.

Such a faith and love as Mahometans have to Mahomet, such many seeming Christians have to Christ; and these are not the confirmed ones, by the testimony in themselves. But such a rooted faith and love, as is proper to the saints, in one that so crosseth their carnal inclinations and interests, as is aforesaid; this cannot be found in any but in Christians. Men of other religions have no such object for faith and love, and no faith or love for such an object.

Consider, also, that so much of God as there is remaining, even in those religions which otherwise are false; so much, it is, even by the professors of it, resisted and opposed, in the points that are cross to carnal interests and inclinations: and, therefore, we find that even among the heathens, as Seneca and others tell us, an abstemious, temperate, contemplative man, that would not do evil as freely as others, was the common:

scorn ; so that the very sparks of virtue that appeared among them, had ill entertainment by the vicious vulgar ; though they could, good cheap, afford them applauses when they were dead, as the wicked among us still will do of the saints that lived before them.

Sect. XVII.

Obj. But if the Gospel were false, yet, if you do but believe it to be true, will it not make all those impressions on the mind, which you so magnify. If one tell me of an everlasting joy or torment, will it not make me deeply affected, and chiefly apply myself to the minding thereof, if I do but believe it, whether it be true or not : so that it is the weight of the matter, and your belief of it, that causeth all these effects, and not the truth of it.

Answ. I confess, I have known some much staggered by this objection, but I doubt not to show you the vanity of it ; as followeth :

1. You suppose that which is not to be supposed, viz. ; that the doctrine is not true which we believe, or that it is not of God, when you say, 'It would have such effects, though it were not of God, if we did but believe it : ' and that you ought not in this disputation to suppose that is manifest, in that we first prove it to be of God, by former arguments, before we plead this argument, from the testimony within us.

We use not this our first reason of belief, but as a confirming reason, procuring a stronger belief : for we do not first believe Scripture to be of God, because it hath done such works on us ; but we believe it by other cogent reasons, that so it may do such works on us. It is a believed doctrine, that mortifieth our lusts, and raiseth up our hearts to God.

Let us suppose such a disputation between the tempter and Adam, in his innocency. The devil saith : 'This great world which thou seest and art a member of was not made by God, but by me.'

Adam saith : 'I know it was made by God ; for as none but God can make such a frame, so I have seen God in it and by it, and by this sight of him my soul hath been possessed with such lively apprehensions of his infinite wisdom, and goodness, and greatness, and hath received such admirable impressions here-upon, that I am fully confirmed by these effects within me, that it is the work of God.'

The tempter replieth ; 'This is but the effect of thine own

belief, for whether God made it or no, thou wilt thus admire God for it, if thou do but believe that he made it.' Here the tempter may not suppose that God made not the world ; though Adam be but proving it, the contrary may be supposed, because this argument from the impress and effects is but a confirming argument, supposing it proved before by other arguments ; That none but God could make this world, and that God did make it.

We can first show the image of the Creator on the world, and thereby prove that it is his workmanship ; but, afterwards, when Adam findeth the impress upon his heart, he is more confirmed in it, against all temptations.

So do we first prove, by the intrinsic nature of the word itself, and by the extrinsic assistant testimony of miracles, and wondrous works, that the Scripture is of God, and the doctrine is his truth ; and then we are confirmed in it by the effects of it upon our own souls. We first show the image of God, and his Son Christ in the Gospel, and then we find the same image imprinted by the Gospel upon our hearts. Suppose a prince have a broad seal that no one can counterfeit, and which he hath also extrinsically testified to be his own ; if I have a grant of some lands, which I hold by writings under that seal, if any affirm that the great seal itself is counterfeit, I will prove the contrary : first, from the seal and extrinsic testimony ; and, then, from the impress of it, which I possess : and, if any say, 'If the same seal were counterfeit, yet, it would make the same impress ;' I should answer, 'That I prove both from the quality of the seal and impress, that it is not counterfeit.'

2. Note, therefore, that we argue not from the impress upon the soul, as an impress, but as such an impress, from the quality or nature of it ; and finding it to be the very image of God, we are the more confirmed, that the seal that made it did bear the same image, and was his.

Sect. XVIII.

Obj. What need you a testimony within you, if you can see the same image of God in the word without you, and so believe before : is not the same sufficient to confirm your belief which did beget it ?

For answer to this objection, I add in the third place :

3. The image of God is more easily discerned in the effects or

impress upon our own hearts, than in the word alone; especially more easily in both than in that one. The one begetteth faith, the other a stronger faith: I showed you the advantages before. You more plainly discern the image in the wax than on the seal, especially when the impress and effects are so near us, and consist in the very apprehensions, and feelings, and workings of our own souls, which will force us to an observation.

Besides, the effect is something more express and operative, and in that respect more illustrious, than the word itself, which is the cause. The fire in the flint is not so discernible as in the flax; the seed of the living creature doth not contain the image of it so actually, expressly, and discernibly, as the birth itself doth. God's word is his seed, and the new creature is the effect; not that there is any part of the new creature which is not actually and expressly required in the word; but that it is to us more discernible, as to the excellency and beauty in the creature, than in the seed; in the effect, than in the course; in the obedience, than in the precept; only the present imperfection of the effect, while the cause is perfect, doth make some difference on the other side; but yet in the nature of the thing, the effect is to us more discernible: nay, the operative nature of the effect is such, that it is oftentimes more discernible, even to a stander-by; which caused the apostle to require that wives should, therefore, walk uprightly with unbelieving husbands, that if any obey not the word, they might without the word be won by the conversation of their wives.

Moreover, you suppose that which is not to be supposed in this objection, viz., That we can believe, and so believe this word to be of God, if it were not so indeed; that is, if he do not, by a special work of his grace, cause us to believe it; for, first, Where man was most guilty he is most depraved: as man sinned by turning from God, so is he become a stranger to God, and blind in the things of God, and of his own recovery and salvation; and as his sin was especially in believing Satan, and denying belief to God, so is he now viciously disposed to the same. Secondly, And, moreover, the way of our recovery is supernatural, and therefore must have a supernatural light within, as well as without, to reveal it to such a low, depraved soul. Thirdly, And, especially, man's corrupted sense and will hath got the mastery of his understanding and reason, so that he cannot easily believe what he is exceedingly unwilling should be true; but all unregenerate men are exceedingly unwilling that this

word should be true, both because it tells them of their sin and misery, and future danger, and because it would take them off from their carnal delights, and would call them to a life which they are utterly undisposed to. By all which it is apparent, that though you may believe the doctrine of Mahomet, or any common or carnal doctrine, without any grace of God, yet so can you not the doctrine of Christ, because it is of another nature.

Obj. What kind of doctrine is that, that a reasonable man cannot believe? It seems, then, it wanteth evidence of its truth.

Ans. It wanteth not evidence suitable to its nature, and to an enlightened understanding, or to sound reason; but its evidence is not of itself sufficient to the carnal mind: not because it wanteth due evidence, but because reason is wanting to that mind; for reasonable, carnal men are not reasonable, as to the exercise, in these spiritual things. Well doth the Scripture call them blind, fools, and madmen, besides themselves, and unreasonable men. How foolish was Aristotle himself, and all his brethren, about matters of his own salvation, for all the strength of his reason in natural things.

5. Lastly, You must difference between a common, superficial, speculative belief and apprehension, and a deep, effectual faith; and then I add further, by way of answer to this objection, that if you speak of a common, superficial belief, the objection itself is false; for if this were not God's word, and yet I did so superficially believe it to be his word, that belief would not change and renew my heart, nor do those great things wherein this testimony within me doth consist. It must be a special, effectual belief, produced by the help of a special grace added to the word, which must do these works upon the souls of men. Such a belief as mere tradition, education, custom, prejudice, or worldly advantages, yea, or bare hearing and reading will produce, will not do these works; and if it were not the word of God, he would never accompany it by that special power and work of his Spirit.

Both these last parts of my answer are evident in the thing itself, and in daily, undeniable experience.

First, It is apparent, that besides a bare belief, there is also necessary, a sober, impartial consideration of the things believed, before they can make such a change upon the heart and life; for else they will slide away, and be ineffectual. Now, in things of this nature, it is not the mere external revelation, without

internal, accompanying grace, that will bring the mind to such consideration.

Besides, while the heart of man is hardened, this consideration will not take effect; but all men's hearts are so hardened till grace soften them; so that you do but set a seal to a stone or wax, that is not softened, while you read the word to a carnal heart, unless the Spirit set in with the reading. Also, men are engaged to contrary courses, and that so strongly that none but the spirit of grace can disengage them, and cause them to receive the due impress of the word, which will turn them another way.

Secondly, Experience also may satisfy us in this point against the objection; for we see that many hundreds sit under the same word, and some do believe effectually, and some do believe superficially, and some believe not at all; yea, and (lest you lay the difference on any preparations in the nature, temper, or education of the persons,) first, many that were of better natures, more sober, considerate temper, and of an engaging education, yet believe not, or not effectually; when others that wanted such advantages do believe: secondly, and the same men that hath heard the same word seven years, or twenty years together, in vain, or persecuteth it as Paul did before his conversion, are after all that changed by it on a sudden, and receive it, and promote it.

And, to conclude, we see also by common experience, that thousands who do superficially believe the Scripture to be the word of God, and to be true, do yet find none of this change upon their hearts, nor that impress from the word, which may be a witness in themselves; so that it is not all that believe the word to be true, but all that effectually believe it, that have this effect. Such a belief as common means may produce, doth it not; but the special belief in the regenerate doth it.

Obj. You seem thus to prove the Scripture true, because you believe it; whereas you should believe it, because it is true: for what is this witness in yourselves, but your own belief.

Ans. I first prove it true, or at least discern it to be true, by other evidence, without me; and then I believe it, because I see that evidence that it is of God, and so is true; and having so believed it, I find those excellent effects of that belief in my soul, which do more strongly persuade me, that it is the word of God, than I was before persuaded, and do confirm me against all temptations to apostacy: so that my first belief, is not because I do believe; nor my second or following belief neither:

but the first is, because I see by other evidence the truth of the word; and the second is, because by believing I have such divine and excellent effects upon my soul.

Sect. XIX.

Quest. But will this argument be of any use to persuade or convince another, or is it only for yourself? We that see not what is in your heart, cannot be convinced by mere latent reasons. Show us such works, and we will believe you.

Ans. 1. The principal use of this internal testimony, we acknowledge, is for the establishment of the believer himself; and therefore the principal success of this argument, is upon himself: and therefore we do not use it as our first or principal argument, for the convincing of others.

2. Yet there is so much in it, for the use of others, as should move them to make trial of that doctrine and religion which others profess to receive such effects from; especially, considering, first, that they are sober and credible persons, and not light, deluded, vain, fantastical people only, that so profess: and if such testimonies shall be refused, and that of so many thousand persons of all degrees, ages, and sexes, and that in all countries and times, and that in a matter of fact, or about the inward experience of their own souls; what testimony then should be regarded? And how would human converse be maintained, and human affairs be transacted, if such testimonies as these shall be judged invalid? 2. Moreover, the external effects in the lives of the saints are so great, and so discernible by those that do converse with them; especially, whose nearness and familiarity doth give them the opportunity of a more full discovery, that even the unbelievers may see that which should convince them, that it is a true, divine, and excellent doctrine, which hath such excellent effects in the lives of the believers. And so great is this evidence, even to others, that if they be not convinced by it, or at least drawn to try that word and religion, which hath such effects, they are left inexcusable, and may justly be condemned, as sinning against reason itself, and shutting their eyes against a visible evidence. Thus far, therefore, the testimony in one, may be useful to another.

Sect. XX.

Quest. If the witness in ourselves be so full and convincing as you say, then, what need have we any more to make use of

the Scriptures. Let the unconverted have recourse to Scripture, who have not the Spirit, but for us that have it, why should we leave a higher teacher to go to a lower. The like may be said as to the ministry of men: 'When we have once the Spirit, and are taught of God, we need not learn of men any more:' for the promise is, that we shall not teach one another; saying, "Know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least to the greatest."

Ans. This reason is, most plainly, contrary to common reason, experience, and Scripture itself. First, It is not only one thing that man wanteth to enable him to understand the matters of his salvation; he wanteth first an outward word of revelation. Secondly, He wanteth an outward teacher, to tell him the meaning of the very terms themselves, which were written in Hebrew and Greek, and to remove difficulties out of his way. Thirdly, He wanteth inward light to cause him to understand this word, when he is thus taught: accordingly God supplieth this threefold want; the first, by giving him the Scripture; the second, by giving him the ministry, and other occasional teachers; the third, by giving him the illumination of the Spirit, to help him to see by the former means, and to make the word and ministry to be effectual. I do not put the Spirit last, as if he were the least and lowest help, but because that in order of nature, the other two must go before, and the Spirit comes and sets them home, and makes them successful. He that knoweth not the office of the Spirit, nor to what use it is that he is given of God, but looketh that he should do a work which he is not sent to do, nay, which he abhorreth, that is, to teach men without, if not against, the Scripture and the ministry; no wonder, if he meet with a spirit of delusion, while he thinks he hath the Spirit of God. There is a twofold work of the Spirit necessary, to reveal to us the truths of Christ: the first, is the inspiration of prophets and apostles to reveal it to us from without, by preaching or writing, and to seal it by miracles. This witness of the Spirit was given when the Scripture was written, and delivered to the church, and so is past already, but still in force for our use and to our confirmation; the second, is that illumination which must cause us to understand the word and ministry; this is it that we are now speaking of, and which is necessary in ourselves.

It is a mad thing for a man to say, 'I have eyes in my head that are not blind, and therefore I have no need of the light

of the sun ;' or to say, 'I have eyes and sun, and therefore have no need of the light in the air, which cometh from the sun ;' or to say, 'I have all this light, and therefore I can read by it without a book ;' or to say, 'I have both light and book, and therefore can read without a teacher :' for if a man would read, or see any other the like object, he must have all these, or more than one ; you must have eyes, and eyes that have the power of seeing, and that not hindered by any inflammation or other disease ; and you must have the light from the sun or candle ; and you must have a book, and have it opened, and have one to teach you so far as you have not learned.

God hath appointed you these three necessary means of your illumination and direction ; the word, the ministry, and the Spirit : "What God hath joined, let no man separate." If you will foolishly go set one of these against another, or make one to exclude the other, as being sufficient without it, when God hath set them all together and made them all necessary, assigning to each a several part in the work of your illumination, you will abuse God and yourselves, and go without the light while you despise the necessary cause of it. You may as well say, 'I have meat, and therefore need no teeth ;' or 'I have meat and teeth, and therefore need no stomach ;' or, 'I have all these, and therefore need no natural life and spirits to digest my meat.' All these are several concauses to produce that effect ; the office of the meat, the teeth, the stomach, the natural heat and digestive power, is not all one, though all to one end ; nor is any one of these sufficient to that end without the rest, though each one may be sufficient to its own use : so the office of the Scripture is not the same with that of the ministry or Spirit ; nor the office of the ministry the same with that of the Spirit and the word ; nor the office of the Spirit the same with that of the word or ministry ; though, yet, all have the same end and full effect, that is, the illumination of the sinner. Will you then say, that one is insufficient, unless it be sufficient without the rest ? No ; the sufficiency of them must be judged of in respect to their own several offices and parts in the work. The word is sufficient to produce faith and holiness, by the help of ministry, ordinarily, or some other guide, and of the Spirit, as ever necessary. The Spirit is sufficient to cause you to understand the word by the help of man's ministry, though he can do it without, yet this is his undertaken office, and he will not teach men to condemn his own

ordinances and means. Will you say, that no wheel in your watch or clock is perfect, unless it will do the whole work without the rest : or will you throw away all the wheels save one, because that one is perfect, without fault, when they are all appointed to work and move together, and none of them to serve without the rest.

And, first, for Scripture ; it is the very book and matter which the Spirit is sent to teach us to understand. What do you expect the Spirit should teach you to understand but the word. Would you have him bring you another Gospel, when Paul would hold an angel from heaven accursed, if he should do so. (Gal. i. 7—9.) Will you say, that a schoolmaster is insufficient in his school, if he teach not his scholars without a book : or, will you throw away your grammar or other books, because you have a good schoolmaster, and say, books are for hem that come not to school. When Christ told his mind to his apostles, and bid them tell it to the world ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he commanded them, he promiseth to be with them to the end of the world ; (Matt. xxviii. 20 ;) that is, to be with the teachers of that same doctrine, which by these apostles was to be delivered, and not of a new doctrine. Paul chargeth Timothy to keep these things to the coming of Christ. (1 Tim. vi. 14.)

These are the truths which the first pastors communicated to the next, and those were to communicate it, as to the people, so to faithful men, that might preserve it as they had done. (2 Tim. ii. 2.) This is the word that is able to make men wise unto salvation ; (2 Tim. iii. 14, 15 ;) and to give them an inheritance among the sanctified. (Acts xx. 32.) By this word, it is, that those must be washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, whom Christ will present pure and spotless to his Father at the last. (Eph. v. 26.) So that, to set the Spirit against his own word, and to cast it off on pretence that you have that Spirit, who is the author of it, and enjoyeth it, and is purposely sent to teach it you, and lead you by it into truth, and sanctify by that word of truth ; this is impudent, unreasonable abuse, both of the Spirit and word, as, one day, deluded souls will find.

2. And for the ministry, if men were not stark blinded by the father of delusions, they could never imagine that God hath discharged them from submission, learning, or obedience to their lawful guidance by the word, as long as they confess the Scriptures to be true. Hath not God set in the body several

members, not having all the same office? All is not an eye, nor all a hand, nor is the body without an eye or hand. (1 Cor. xii. 14, 17, 19, 28.) The apostle commandeth Timothy to commit the same things which he had learned, to faithful men, who might be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. ii. 2.) He directeth him how to choose, and ordain elders in every city, and what men to choose and ordain. (1 Tim. iii.; Tit. i. 5.) He tells him that he that desireth the office of a bishop, desireth a good work. (1 Tim. iii. 1.) Peter biddeth the elders, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, (or as some read it, in your charge, or under you,) taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind," &c. (1 Pet. v. 2—4.) The command is most express to all the churches of the Hebrews: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." (Heb. xiii. 17.) And (verse 7 and 24) they are twice more called, "Them that rule over them, and (as verse 7) that preach to them the word of God." And the apostles ordained elders in every church. (Acts xiv. 23.) These were commanded to teach in season, and out of season; (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2;) and therefore must be heard. They must feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost doth make them overseers. (Acts xx. 28.) Mark, the Holy Ghost doth make men overseers and pastors of the churches, and yet these men would cast off overseers, because they have the Holy Ghost. Christ committeth to them as ambassadors, the preaching of the word of reconciliation in his name; (2 Cor. v. 19—21;) and as guides, the ruling of the Church of God. (1 Tim. iii. 4, 5; Heb. xiii. 7, 17;) and calleth them wise stewards whom the Lord makes rulers over his household, to give them their meat in due season. (Luke xii. 42.) He saith, the elders that rule well, are worthy of double honour, especially they that labour in the word and doctrine. (1 Tim. v. 17.) He brandeth the disobedient and untractable, with the name of unruly men, whom Christians must avoid; whether it be the *ἄτακτοι*, that are as soldiers that keep not rank and file, and will not know their colours; or the *ἀνυπότακτοι*, that know not how to be obedient, or submit to rule and government. The first sort, mentioned 1 Thess. v. 14, the second sort, Tit. i. 10, 6, though we translate both 'unruly.' And is it not for the use of believers that have the Spirit, that these officers are set in the church, and is it not the church of

believers that is commanded to hear and obey them? Nay, hath not Christ set them in the church purposely for the edifying of the body, and the perfecting of the saints, till we all come to a perfect man, &c. (Eph. iv. 11—14.) And purposely to keep Christians, that they may not be as children tossed up and down with every wind of doctrine according to cunning sleights and subtilty of men, by which they lie in wait to deceive? Nay, doth not Christ himself rule and teach by them as his officers? and say, "He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." (John xiii. 20; Mark ix. 39; Luke ix. 48.) So that it is most evident that it was never Christ's intent to take down that ministry which by himself was set up, nor to make it needless, till men are perfected and have no more sin.

And as for that part of the objection from Jer. xxxi. 34, it is plain that it was far from the mind of the Holy Ghost, to make the ministry unnecessary to them that have the Spirit. For as the Spirit was given by the ministry of the apostles, so the same apostles were necessary for the building up of them that had the Spirit, and therefore did use to visit and teach the churches to that end, and set elders over them to be their constant guides and teachers. The text, indeed, doth assure us, that knowledge and the means of it shall much more abound under the Gospel than before; and that more persons shall have knowledge, and greater knowledge, and that of the Spirit's preaching. But the plain meaning of the words, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me," &c., seems to be this, they shall not be ignorant of God, as heathens, nor as to the elect, without the saving knowledge of him, as hypocrites, and therefore shall not have need to be taught to know God, as men that do not know him: it shall be no such rare thing to know the Lord. But first, this denieth not, but that they may have need to be taught to know more of God, though not simply to know God. We need not teach men that which they know of God already; but we need to teach them so much as they do not know. And Paul himself saith of himself and all men, "That we know but in part here." (1 Cor. viii. 2, and xiii. 9.) "And we must grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. iii. 18; Phil. iii. 12, 15.) We have need to be fed with strong meat, after we have lived on milk, and to be taught higher when we have learned the principles. (Heb. v. 11, 12,

and vi. 1—3.) It seems these objectors would not learn of Paul himself, if he were alive, because he is a man. Secondly, And is there not much necessary to be known, besides the simple knowledge of God himself? We must know ourselves, and know many truths, and duties, precepts, promises, and threats, temptations, and dangers, rewards, &c. So that though the elect after conversion, have not need to be taught simply to know God; yet they have need to be taught a further measure of the knowledge of God, and also to know his will and word.

As there is no mention in Luke xv. of righteous persons that need no repentance, that is, no such conversion or repentance as the impenitent and unconverted need, which is a turning from a state of reigning sin to God, though yet they need the repentance of imperfect saints, and therefore must daily pray, "Forgive us our trespasses;" and he that saith, "He hath no sin, is a liar, and deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him: for in many things we offend all." (1 John i. 8; James iii. 2.) So is it here; the illuminate do not need to be taught to know the Lord, as the blind world that know him not. Such a phrase also Christ useth to the woman of Samaria: "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." (John iv. 14.) That is, shall never have that necessity of new supply as before he had: he shall not have the thirst of emptiness and former need, but yet he shall have the thirst of loving desire, and need of greater pleasure: so here.

Quest. Is it needful for that man to use extrinsic arguments to prove the Scripture and christian religion to be of God himself, and to resist temptations, who hath the witness within himself to prove it by?

Answ. God's evidences must not be separated, much less must one be pleaded to the neglect of the rest. We find the apostles oft pleading the first arguments of miracles, and the eye-witnesses' credit, and the like, with the churches of believers: as the work within us is not the first testimony, but a secondary confirming testimony, so doth it not make the first unnecessary or void. Our internal testimony hath relation to, and dependance on the evidences that are in, and with the word itself without us. Besides that, by the external we must convince other men.

Sect. XXI.

Quest. Will this testimony within us be as useful and advantageous to us, in particular points of controversy, as in the

main matter of Christianity itself? May we not think that he that hath most of the Spirit, is likeliest to be in the right?

Ans. You must difference between those particular points that are essential to Christianity, or of necessity to salvation, and those that are very useful, though not absolutely necessary, and those that are niceties of smaller use; also you must difference between the spirit of holiness in general, and some special gift of the Spirit in particular. And so I further answer:

1. In points essential to Christianity, or of absolute necessity to salvation, the witness within them will keep right the elect, who are true believers, when more learned, subtle men may be deceived.

2. In points of very great use to salvation, though not of absolute necessity, such true believers have a great advantage to hold right against all temptations, from this witness, or work of grace within them. But yet as they may possibly fall into a scandalous sin, and be recovered, so they may possibly for all the witnesses within them, be led into some foul and dangerous error, to the great wrong of the Gospel, the trouble of the church, and the wounding of themselves. Yet *cæteris paribus*, there being equal helps, and other advantages, a godly man is more likely here to be in the right, than an ungodly; but yet sometimes an ungodly man is more likely to be right here than he.

3. In the knowing of natural things, or the grammatical construction of the Scripture, and so in opening many particular texts, and in understanding and maintaining the truth in many particular, lower controversies, though the spirit of holiness be much advantage to men, yet the particular and more common gifts of the Spirit, which ordinarily accompanieth natural wit and diligent study, is a greater advantage; and, therefore, it is ordinary for the Spirit of interpretation to be given, where the Spirit of sanctification is denied; and for God to give many the saving knowledge of himself in Christ, to whom he gives not the knowledge of many truths in nature or theology, nor the knowledge of the meaning of much of the Scripture, as to having those helps which are necessary thereto; for in these things, and in natural knowledge, God is pleased to work by natural means, and by men's industrious studies.

4. He that hath both the Spirit of sanctification, and acquired gifts of knowledge together, is the complete Christian, and likely to know much more, than he that hath either of these alone. Where nature, grace, industry, and outward helps all meet together, they make the most useful, accomplished men.

5. They that have the greatest measure of the Spirit, are bound to use study and human helps, in subordination to the Spirit. Diligence and common helps, with God's ordinary blessing, may bring them in a natural, acquired knowledge, and grace will sanctify it, and cause them to use it aright for God.

Sect. XXII.

But because they are points of great use, I will review two of these before-mentioned, and show you, First, That it is a great advantage against temptations, to those particular sins or errors that are plainly against holiness, to have this witness of the Spirit of holiness in ourselves ; Secondly, That it is a great advantage even to the holiest man, to the clear understanding and opening of Scriptures, to have natural and acquired knowledge, commonly called human learning, and to be a laborious, diligent student.

1. And for the first, all the reasons before-mentioned do prove it ; for if the Spirit do so much befriend Christianity in the main, it must needs also befriend the several parts of it, and apparent means and necessaries to its support.

First, If any man should tempt a sanctified man to doubt whether the Gospel written by Mark, or John, were the word of God ; the same Spirit which attesteth to the christian doctrine in general, would do much by its testimony to fortify him in this. He would find something within him so suitable to those Scriptures, as would hold him to them in an honour and admiration ; and so of others.

Secondly, If a libertine should tempt him to think that sin is no great evil, nor displeasing to God, and that it is only as men's consciences make it, and judge of it : the Spirit of holiness within him, would fortify the believer against this temptation. Alas, he hath felt that sin is bitter ; and he hath that within him, that will force him so to judge ! It goes against his present taste, as bitter things are to us ; and it will need to be a very subtle argument, that should force the veriest fool, or child, or any man of sound senses, to believe that gall or aloes are sweet, when he hath tasted them. There is a Spirit in a saint, that is an enemy to sin, and causeth a hatred of it, wherever he comes ; and, therefore, is a great help against all such temptations.

Thirdly, If any man should tempt a true Christian to question any of God's attributes, especially those manifested in his deal-

ings with men, as whether he be wise, and knoweth all things; whether he be holy, just, and hateth sin; or whether he be good and merciful to those that fear him? The witness within him would help him very much to resist such temptations. All these attributes of God are written out in the believer's heart, and make up God's image there; he hath tried that God is most wise and good, and holy, and just, and great: if any should say, that God is the cause of men's sin, he hath that within him that will not suffer him to entertain that conceit; if any should tempt him to carnal, corporeal conceits of God, he hath that within him that will not suffer him to be of such a mind.

Fourthly, If any should teach him, that there is no heaven, nor hell, but what is in men's own conceits; he hath that within him that will not suffer him to be of that opinion. The very life of grace within him, doth carry up his heart to heaven, and it is the end of his very religion and life; and the fear of God within him, doth cause him to fly from the jaws of hell, and he, as it were, hears the Spirit say to him, as the angel to Lot, when he carried him out of the danger of Sodom's flames: "Escape, fly for thy life: look not behind thee:" the Spirit within him causeth him to fear God, as one that can destroy both body and soul in hell fire.

Fifthly, If any should tempt him to doubt, whether Christ hath any congregated church on earth, as the seekers do; he hath in him the experience of comfortable communion in that church; and withal he hath that within him, which will not suffer him to have such base, extenuating thoughts of Christ, as if he were a titular king without a kingdom, or could not convey to men the benefits which he hath purchased, or had failed to fulfil his promises to his church, or to make good his ground, and maintain his interest.

Sixthly, If they would tempt him to deny that Christ hath any ministers in office, or to revile the godly ministers as anti-christian, or to reproach them as no ministers of Christ, he hath that experience of Christ speaking in them, and working by them, and maintaining by them his truth, and order in his churches; which is a witness within him against such temptations.

Seventhly, If he be tempted to ways of separation and division, to withdraw from the minister as unworthy to rule him, or from the church as unworthy to communicate with such as he, and so to betake himself causelessly into separate societies; he

hath a witness within him of the sinfulness of such a course. That one Spirit within him, hath possessed him with an inclination to unity, and such fears of divisions, and sense of their mischiefs, as a man hath of the dividing or wounding his own body: it hath given him that sense of his own unworthiness, that humility, that charity to others, that he is far readier to say, 'I am not worthy to join with the church,' than 'The church is not worthy to join with me.' He feels such an insufficiency, and ignorance in himself, that he rather takes himself exceedingly beholden to a minister, that will teach him, than grudges to be taught, or says, 'I will not be catechised, be ruled, by such as you.' He so loves the church, order, discipline, ordinances, and ministers of Christ, that he will not easily be drawn from them.

Eighthly, If any should tempt him to withdraw from the communion of the church in the Lord's Supper, the comfortable experience which he hath had there, in the strengthening his faith, the quickening his graces, and killing his sins, would very much strengthen him against such temptations.

Ninthly, If he should be tempted to forbear the hearing of the word, or the singing of psalms to God's praise, or the prayers of the church; he hath that experience of the happy effects of these on himself, and that in his own heart, which correspondeth with these ordinances, that it will much corroborate him against the reasonings of deceivers.

Tenthly, If he be tempted to cast off the instructing of his family, or worshipping God in it, he hath within him a witness that family worship is due to that God, who must govern and provide for, and defend him and his family; and his experience of the fruits of it, will do much to confirm him against such delusions.

Eleventhly, Against the main body of the Antinomian doctrine, which lieth open to a plain discovery, and tendeth to a neglect, and remissness in our duty; he hath that within him, that by testifying against it, may give him great advantage to escape. I will not stand to mention the particulars, having done it elsewhere.

Twelfthly, In a word, if any temptation do assault him, to any branch of atheism, infidelity, or ungodliness and libertinism, taking him off from duty, or encouraging him to sin, the witness within him will speak against it; and is a singular advantage to him for his preservation.

Especially in such cases as these, is this inward establishment more necessary :

1. When men are so furiously, or subtly, or incessantly assaulted by the tempter, that their reason seems to be non-plussed, and they are at a loss.

2. When they fall among seducers, who by interest or seeming piety, and sheep's-clothing, or by cunning reasonings, or confident affirmations, or terrible threats, would bear them down from truth and unity, and do even bring them to a stand.

3. When poor Christians are of so weak parts of reason, that they are not able to dispute against deceivers, then their inward experiences, and the Spirit, is evidently necessary.

4. When a man is in sickness, or near death, having his body and senses weakened, and so is less fit to make use of his reason in a disputing way, he may make singular use of the witness within him against all temptations.

Sect. XXIII.

I come now to the second point to show you, that in points that are more separable from saving grace, learning, wit, industry, and outward helps, may be so great advantage, that an ungodly man may excel in all these, and a godly man may be very weak : an ungodly man may be ordinarily in the right, when a godly man, without such helps, may be mistaken. And therefore it is a desperate, and destructive conceit in any man, to think, that because he hath the Spirit, he is therefore more able to expound Scripture, or teach it to the people, or understand controversies, than learned men that have not the Spirit of holiness ; or to think, that they should go to an ignorant, godly man for resolution and teaching, rather than to a knowing man that is not godly, as if the former were most likely to know such truth. And upon this conceit, men cry down human learning, and ministers for esteeming it, and cry up the Spirit, to a use that God doth not intend it. I have no mind, the Lord knows, to set up any thing of man against God, nor God's common gifts above his special, nor to draw any soul into an undue esteem of any thing that is in their guides, but only to show them the naked truth. I would entreat, therefore, all poor deluded souls, that are carried away with these forementioned mistakes, to lay by their prejudice and passion awhile, and to weigh impartially these following considerations.

1. Consider, God is the author of nature, as well as of grace ;

and so of all truths about nature, as well as about grace. All light is from the Father of lights, and all truths from the God of truth : it is therefore a wicked thing to call the knowledge of God's creatures 'human learning,' in contempt, or as if it were not of God ; only, indeed, it is a more common knowledge, and therefore not proper to the church, and sanctified ones ; but yet when sanctified, it is so proper to them.

2. Consider, as God is the author both of nature and grace, so of nature before grace ; and so natural truths, or the knowledge of the nature of things, doth necessarily go before the knowledge of our recovery by Jesus Christ. And therefore, as both are contained in Scripture, so doth the word begin with the discovery of nature, before it mention the revelation of grace ; "In the beginning God created the heaven, and the earth," &c. ; is the beginning of the Bible. Our physics are the first part of God's word, laid down in Genesis, before the rest ; and the necessity of this is evident. If God and man must enter a covenant, or if man must be under a law, having rewards and penalties, and the creatures are the materials of the duties and conditions : we must needs know first that God is, and what God is, as far as necessary for such as we, and what man is, and what the creature is that we must use, and what the reward and punishment are. Morality is but the modality of natural being ; and the being should be considered before the mode : so that this part of philosophy, which we call our physics, is necessary and divine, delivered in God's word, and first delivered ; yea, and it is oft repeated, as in Job, the Psalms, &c. And it was, and should be a great part of men's study to know God's works, and God in them : for, saith the Spirit of God, "His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." (Psalm cxi. 2, 3.) O how many high and excellent praises are given to God, by the saints in Scripture, in the contemplation of his works.

3. Consider, that the very creatures themselves, even the frame of heaven and earth, are a book written by the finger of God, containing in legible characters his image, I mean the discovery of his glorious power, and wisdom, and goodness. He made man perfect, as a part of this perfect world, and set him here to see, and love, and honour his Creator, as beholding him in the face of this glorious creation. So that it was man's duty to read this book, and find, and honour, God in all. But man stopped in the creature itself, and overlooked God, and so

fell from God to the creature. Jesus Christ having undertaken the restoring us unto God, doth not destroy, but restore this creation: God is still our Maker; we have still the book of the creature before us, though blotted by the just punishment of our sin. It is still our duty to study, see, and admire God in this creation: though we have another work, even of redemption, to admire, and the Lord's day specially appointed for that, yet doth not that destroy the former, but advance it. We are brought back to the Creator by Christ the Redeemer, and bound now to magnify him for the works of creation, as much as before. It is a great sin of many, and most Christians, that they forget this, or make so little conscience of it.

If you say, 'But what is all this to the matter of human learning?' I answer that in the next consideration.

4. Consider, that which you call human learning, is either the knowledge of things or words. It is honourable, in that it is knowledge; for ignorance and darkness is the kingdom of Satan. That learning, which consisteth in knowing things, is first and principally about the nature of them, to know what they are: and this, you see, we are directed to in the word of God, and by the book of the creature, which showeth itself to us. So that our physics, which is a great part of human learning, is but the knowledge of God's admirable works; and hath any man the face to call himself God's creature, and yet to reproach it as vain human learning, if any shall know the glorious works of his Creator? The like I may say about the quantities and qualities of these works, and the uses of them for man's good, which take up the rest of the sciences and arts, which you call human learning, about things. And is this to be blamed, which the very word and works of God commend? Why, man, darest thou say that God hath made any thing, which it is a dishonour for us to study and know, except his secrets, which we cannot know?

Indeed, if any would pry into these secrets, or pretend to know more of God's works than he doth or can know, or do deliver his ungrounded conceits as certainties, or do lay more necessity or excellency in the knowledge of smaller things than of great, or do take up in the creature, and study it but for itself, and the mere delight or honour of knowing, and do not look to God, and search after him in all his works, or if he do not employ his learning and knowledge, when he hath it, to God's service, but to sin, or to his own vain-glorious ends: in any of

these cases, I excuse no learned men ; but this is but the abuse of learning. I confess it is too commonly so abused, and our books have too much vanities and uncertainties ; but meat and drink is as much abused as learning, and yet you despise it not as needless. It is true, also, that many heathens excelled in this learning, and that they abused it in these above-said ways : but yet it was a divine light that manifested so much of truth, even to these men ; and it was God's truth which they received by the study of the creatures, though they detained it in unrighteousness. Yea, so much excellency was in it, that the abuse of it will leave them without excuse, though they never had the Scriptures, nor heard of Christ. " For that which may be known of God, is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse." (Rom. i. 19, 20.) And dare you vilify that learning that so clearly giveth us the knowledge of the invisible things of God ? You see, then, the study of God's works is a Christian's duty.

And for the other part of learning, the knowledge of words, our sin and natural infirmity have made it a matter of that necessity. We cannot converse together without understanding one another's speeches.

This learning, which consisteth in the knowledge of words, is either the knowledge of their signification, either primitive and proper, or borrowed and improper ; to which uses are grammar and rhetoric ; or else the knowledge of their disposition, and use in reasoning, and directing, or expressing the mind, which logic performeth. And is there any man so unreasonable as to think either of these unnecessary ? Is it not needful to understand the signification of Scripture words and phrases, before we can understand the matter by those words ? And is it not needful to discern when men do reason solidly, and when they jangle and miss the matter, or cunningly deceive ? When men speak sense, and when they speak nonsense ? What is a man without words, sense, or reason, but a beast ? A grammarian is one that knows the meaning of the words, and a logician, one that knows how to use them reasonably. And would you be without either of these ? If any abuse these to cavilling sophistry, that is no more reason against the right use of them, than that men should not use reason, because bad men do abuse it. Consider, there-

fore, what learning, true learning, is, and then you will see that there is small reason to contemn it. When men speak against a thing before they know what it is, no wonder if they know not what they say.

5. The angels, and the glorified spirits of the just, know more of God's works, and all these words and matters in question, than the greatest scholar on earth doth, and if you come to heaven, you will know more yourselves, at least of that much which will then be useful to be known. And will you despise that knowledge, as human, which is angelical, and wherein the most perfect do most excel?

6. Can you understand any Scripture, without the help of this learning, in yourselves, or others? The Spirit delivered it to the world in Greek and Hebrew, can you so understand it, before it is translated? If not, then the knowledge of those tongues is necessary in the translators. And would you have us so wholly take up all on trust from them, from age to age ever after, as not to know whether they translate it true or false; or whether there be any such thing as they tell us? If you yourselves must take it upon trust, from those that do understand it, when you do not, methinks you should so much the more honour and reverence them, whom you are fain to be so much beholden to, and whom you must trust in a matter of such concernment to your salvation; as, whethèr ever any of this was in the text of the Hebrew and Greek, which you find in the English? Sure that which is so laudable to the translators, is not to be contemned in your teachers.

What if the Rhemist papists tell you, that the Bible is falsely translated, I pray you what answer will you give them, if none of your teachers knew it to be otherwise, whose words you must take as credible persons? Send a Hebrew and Greek Bible into Wales or Ireland, and when that converteth souls without an interpreter, then I will begin to think learning less necessary: yea, or when yourselves can so understand it. Besides, if there be not some knowledge of the situation of places, of the customs and state of that country, of the proverbial speeches of those times and places, with divers like things, it is not probable that you should understand much of the Scriptures.

7. Consider well, to what use and end it is, that the Spirit of holiness is sent, and then you will never think that this Spirit will serve you without common learning. This sanctifying Spirit is given to sanctify, that is, to give us the saving know-

ledge of God by the interpreted or expounded word, and to draw up our hearts from the creature to him, and to conform us to our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have believed: but it is not the office of this spirit of holiness, as such, to teach men the knowledge of all natural truths, or the signification of words and phrases. Many thousands that have the Spirit cannot understand a Hebrew or Greek Bible, nor could they have told, by this time, how the year, or the week, goes about, nor how many years have been since Christ, nor what a year is, nor what day of the week goes over their heads, if they had never had the help of astronomers or learned men. The Spirit of holiness is given to bring men safe to heaven, and so it will do; but not to make them understand every natural or theological truth.

8. Consider: your very learning to speak, or read, or write, is as much human learning as the learning to know the nature of creatures, and sense of strange languages: and if you renounce these, which you neither have by nature or grace, what persons would you be? You may as well say, therefore, that the Spirit will serve without learning to write, or read, or speak; for the difference of the cases is only in degree, and not in kind.

9. Consider well that there are several employments that God hath for men in the world, and in the church; and, accordingly, there are several gifts of the Spirit. For salvation, he giveth the Spirit of saving grace, which shall teach men effectually the need of Christ, the evil of sin, and the like, but not every other truth. Those whom he will employ as interpreters of Scripture, and teachers, and guides to others, he will furnish with gifts that are necessary for such employments. And a man may teach others, that may not be sanctified or saved himself; and many are sanctified and saved that are unfit to teach others. Are all prophets? Are all apostles? Are all teachers? Is all the body an eye, or hand? God may give teachers a spirit of teaching, and he gave Saul a spirit of government, and many wicked men, in the first age, a spirit of teaching, interpreting tongues, miracles; and deny these to better men, because he intendeth not them to the same use. Public gifts are for public use.

10. Consider, you must distinguish between extensive and intensive knowledge; between knowing more and more truths; and knowing the same truths better, and more effectually. The Spirit of holiness is not given, to know more truths by, than an unsanctified man can know, but to know the same better. You

cannot name any truth which a gracious man knoweth, but an hypocrite may have a speculative knowledge of the same, and say the same words concerning it, as he can say. But grace makes a man know that heartily and affectingly, which another knows but superficially: but though the Spirit cause not the sanctified to know any man more for number of truths than an hypocrite may know; yet the commoner gifts of the Spirit, by study and learning, cause many ungodly men to know many truths, which thousands of the godly never knew: which truths, in their place, are usual and excellent.

11. Consider that it is the work of the Spirit of holiness to cause you savingly to know, at least, fundamentals, and the substance of christian religion; but it belongs more to learning and a commoner gift of the Spirit to enable men to defend these same fundamentals in disputation against an adversary, and orderly, methodically, and aptly to teach them to others, and rationally to explain them.

12. It is the work of the Spirit of holiness to give men saving grace in possession, but it more belongs to the common gifts of wit and learning, to define or describe these same graces, or movingly to talk of them. Many a man that never had faith or love, can give you a true definition of faith and love; and many a man that hath them cannot tell you what they be. Thousands believe savingly, that have not wit enough to tell you truly what believing is; and many thousands have the Spirit that know not what the Spirit is. So that an unsanctified man may more truly, and more exactly describe any grace, by the help of learning, than you have it by the Spirit of holiness, though you feel the powerful effects of it, which he never felt. I can give a truer description of any county in England, and the distance of one town from another by my maps, though I know not the places, than most men that live in those counties that do, because they know but a smaller part of it; and yet they know their own homes better, and their knowledge is more sensible and experimental, and beneficial to them.

And, by the way, you may hence perceive that ministers or others should be very cautious how they cast any from church or communion, because they cannot tell them how they were converted, or what faith, or love, or holiness is. Seeing the Spirit gives these graces to many, to whom he gives not wit to define them, nor words to tell you what they do know of them. Their lives will tell you better than their tongues, whether they be sincere.

Obj. But how can men have faith, or love, that know not what it is?

Answ. They feel how it works within them, but they cannot describe it to themselves, or others. Are not divines themselves disagreed about the definitions of faith, repentance, and almost all graces? May not millions of poor men have health of body, that cannot tell you what health is; and have the humours in right temper that cannot tell you what those humours are? How little know we what our own natural, animal, or vital spirits are; how our food is concocted; how sanguification, and carnification are effected; how little know we of the soul itself, by which we know, and the life by which we live? What wonder, then, if a man have grace, that knows but little what grace is? as one saith, (Lod. Vives,) "God gave man a soul to use, rather than to know." So I may say of grace, God gives men grace to use, rather than to know, define, describe, or dispute about.

13. It is not the work of the Spirit, at least ordinarily, to teach men any particular truths, but what mere experience teacheth, without the use of outward means, by the industry and study of ourselves, or others, or both: but the Spirit worketh by these, and blesseth these to you. Every godly man hath more love to truth in general, and is more disposed to the reception of it, than others; and by the consideration of the fundamentals, the Spirit hath given him the knowledge of them: but as it was not without their own consideration, that the first were known, so are they not actually acquainted with all truths, that after they shall know. It is not the work of the Spirit, to tell you the meaning of Scripture, and give you the knowledge of divinity, without your own study and labour, but to bless that study, and give you knowledge thereby. Did not Christ open the eyes of the man born blind, as suddenly, as wonderfully, and by as little means, as you can expect to be illuminated by the Spirit? And yet that man could not see any distant object out of his reach, till he took the pains to travel to it, or it was brought to him, for all his eyes were opened. When he was newly healed, he could not have told what was done in Samaria, nor seen what was in Jericho, nor what a town Tyre or Sidon was, unless he would be at the pains to travel thither. And if he would see Rome, he must be at so much more pains, as the place was more distant. Would you have been so silly as to say, 'This man can presently see Samaria, Tyre, Rome, because Christ hath opened his eyes?' So

is it here. If Christ have anointed your eyes with the eye salve of the Spirit, and removed the inward impediments of your sight, yet it is not that you may presently know all truths, which you never heard of, or read of, or studied to know. You must study, and study again; and the further off, and more difficult the truths are, the more must you study, and then expect to know by the blessing of the Spirit: let experience witness. Did you not hear all those truths which you know from the mouth of some teacher, or other person, or else consider and study of them yourselves, before you came to know them by the Spirit? Go not, then, out of God's way, if you expect his blessing.

14. Doth not experience commonly tell you, that men know more that study and have learning, than those that do not? Are not the ministers and other learned men, and godly people, that have studied the Scriptures long, the most knowing people in England? Nothing but mad ignorance or impudence can deny it. What man breathing knew as much the first hour he received the Spirit, as he doth after many years' study and diligent labour?

15. To reject study on pretence of the sufficiency of the Spirit, is to reject the Scripture itself: for as a man rejecteth his land that refuseth to till it, or rejecteth his meat if he refuse to eat it, though he praise it never so much; so doth he reject the Scripture that refuseth to study it, or to study that which must first be known, or is necessary thereto. Meditation digesteth the word, which else is cast up again.

Obj. We would have men study Scripture, but not human writings.

Answ. You would have men study Scripture, but not learn to understand the words of it, or the languages it was written in? What a contradiction is that. You would have men study God's word, and not his works? The book of supernatural revelation, and not the book of nature; as if both were not God's, or both our duty?

Obj. Let men study the works of God, and spare not, but not books of human learning.

Answ. May we not take the help of those that have studied the same works before us? Then, if every man must begin all anew, and must make use of no other man's helps and experiments, we shall know but little, and knowledge will make but a pitiful progress. If we may take the help of men by talking with them, why not by reading their writings? How-

ever, it seems you will allow us tutors in human learning. Hath not God made men to be helpful to one another, and communicative of their knowledge? If these wise objectors knew not of any place or country in the world, but what themselves have seen, or of any actions in former ages, or later, but what they were eye witnesses of, what moles would they be? You may next persuade us to creep into our mothers' wombs again, and refuse human help to come forth. If you will read or talk with travellers, to know what is in other parts of the world; and read history to know what is in other ages of the world: why may not we read and hear philosophers, to know what they have found out about the nature of the creatures?

If you would never know any thing in physic by any books or teachings of those before you, that have learned more than you, but every man must begin all again himself, how many would such physicians murder; and what sots would they be! If you knew no more in astronomy, about the motions of the sun, moon, &c., the times and seasons, than you can find out yourselves by the observation of the heavens, what wise astronomers would you be! What forgetful men are our enemies to human learning, that think the Spirit enough without it; that yet they will every year buy a new almanac! Away with them hereafter, or else away with your folly; for, certainly, almanacs are certain parcels of the most aspiring, human learning, such as they are.

16. Consider whether, under pretence of magnifying the Spirit, you do not bewray most notorious pride in the magnifying of yourselves, and the contempt of those whom you are bound to learn of. Is it not palpable pride for you that never bestowed the twentieth part of the study and pains, as the ministers of the Gospel have done, to understand the Scripture, to be conceited that you understand it as well as they? Is it a knowledge that comes irrationally into man, he knows not how, when he never mindeth it? Is not the Spirit and diligent study together, like to do more for increase of knowledge than the Spirit will do without such studies? Why should you, in proud censoriousness, think that godly teachers have not the Spirit as well as you? They value it as much; they pray as hard for the Spirit; they confess the need of it as much as you; they have the same God, the same Christ, and the same promise as you; they show forth the fruits of it in holiness as much as you; and yet proud men dare lift up themselves in boasting of the Spirit, and despising their godly, painful teachers, as being without the Spirit:

not only saying, as Korah and his conspirators, 'Ye take too much upon you; are not all the Lord's people holy?' but also saying, 'It is only the people that are holy, and the priests are unholy.' And when all is done they can give no other proof of it, but either some common, human frailties, or the falls of some few, or the wickedness of the ungodly ones whom their faithful teachers are as willing to cast out as they, and whom they disown as well as they do. You will confess that a man that hath studied physic all his days, is likely to be a better physician than you that never studied it; and a man that hath studied law, is likely to be a better lawyer; and that he were a proud man that would say, 'Though I never studied these things, yet by the Spirit I know them as well as you.' And you would see your pride as well in this case of theology, if you did but know and consider that the Spirit worketh by means and man's industry; and that the gift of interpretation, understanding languages, and the creatures, is not a gift of sanctification, but such as is common to unsanctified men, and especially to make men useful to others, and publicly serviceable to the godly where they live.

17. It is God's command that ministers should study to show themselves workmen that need not be ashamed, and to divide aright the word of truth. (1 Tim. iv. 15.) And give themselves wholly to these things. (2 Tim. ii. 15.) And all Christians that will have knowledge must "apply their heart, and incline their ear to it; they must cry after knowledge, and lift up their voice for understanding: they must seek her as silver, and search for her, as for hidden treasure; and then, in this way, they shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God: for the Lord (thus) giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. ii. 2—6.) It is the description of the godly blessed man, (Psalm i,) that he doth meditate in God's law day and night; and therefore he doth not expect, that the Spirit should teach it to him, or give him the fruits of it, while he is at no labour to procure it, but forgetteth or neglecteth it: and for the study of the holy languages, and God's works, I have proved it our duty before. So that you may see, that they who pretend the Spirit as sufficient without hard studies and learning, they contradict the Scriptures which the Spirit did endite, and so make the Spirit contrary to the Spirit. But we will believe the Spirit in the word, rather than that in them.

18. The Scriptures plainly tell us, that there are several ages of men in Christ, some babes, some young men, and some fathers ; (1 John ii. 12, 13 ; 1 Cor. iii. 1 ;) and that they are to grow by degrees, according to their time and standing in the church, from one age to another, and from lesser knowledge unto more. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe ; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v. 12—14.) Note here, First, That there are some truths hard, and some easier ; some called strong meat, and some called milk. Secondly, That many may understand the easy principles, and feed on the milk, who yet understand not the harder truths ; and yet both these sorts have the same Spirit : and therefore all that have the Spirit, understand not hard truths. Thirdly, Nay, these babes that have the Spirit, are said to be dull of hearing, and to have been long hearing from their teachers, and yet understand not ; so hardly did they learn, though they had both Spirit, word, and teachers. Fourthly, Note, that these young Christians, though they had the Spirit, must still live under men's teaching, for further knowledge. Fifthly, Specially note, that it was expected that they should have grown in knowledge, according to, first, their time, and standing in the church ; secondly, and according to their use and exercise of their senses to discern. So that for all men have the Spirit, yet God expecteth not that they should be strong men in knowledge the first day ; nor understand hard truths, till they had time, teaching, and exercise ; yea, and oft they come short after all this, for want of their own use and exercise with diligence.

Hence it is, that when Paul giveth direction, what kind of persons should be ordained bishops, he saith, "Not a novice, (that is, a late convert, or young Christian) lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." (1 Tim. iii. 6.) It is here a matter well worthy your observation, 1. That young converts are not expected to have that measure of grace, as old, exercised Christians. 2. That young converts or novices, are far more apt and more likely to fall into the condemnation of the devil, by being lifted up with pride, than old, ex-

perienced Christians are. These things are not spoken in vain by the Spirit ; and these times have sadly manifested the truth of them, among us. The Lord teach young Christians to lay them seasonably to heart.

Nay, further, note this, if it were the work of the Spirit to give so full a measure of knowledge at the first to every one that hath it, as these think, then how could any of those Scripture passages be true, that tell us the saints do grow and increase, and that it is the nature of grace so to do ; that at first it is as a grain of mustard seed : and we are commanded "To grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. iii. 18.) Doth not all this plainly show, that grace is usually least at first, and must be still on the thriving hand ; and so must our knowledge. How, then, can young, inexperienced Christians think, that because they have the Spirit, they must know as much as their teachers, who have had longer time, and greater helps and studies.

19. Consider, also, that so great is the deceitfulness of the heart of man, and so cunningly doth the devil transform himself into an angel of light, to deceive men, that it is the easiest matter in the world for a man to be confident that he hath the Spirit of God, when it is only his own proud imagination, or a spirit of delusion. The multitudes of heretics in the first ages of the church, did seem to have much of an extraordinary spirit, but it proved a wicked spirit, by their wicked doctrines and lives, even from Simon Magus, their leader, to many generations after him. Those men have not most of the Spirit that boast most of it; nor are they ever the more likely to have it, for quick concluding that other men are without it, whose hearts they know not. It is the easiest matter in the world to boast of the Spirit, and reproach another as carnal ; but it is those that have the Spirit indeed, who have the fruits of the Spirit, and those have the greatest measure of it, that abound most in these ; they that have the most effectual apprehensions of the greatness, and goodness, and wisdom of God ; of their own sin, and the need of Christ and grace ; of the truth and excellency of the life to come, and the vanity of this life : they that are most conformed to Christ in humility, meekness, and lowliness of mind, esteeming others above themselves, and serving one another in love ; that have most hatred to sin, and care to subdue it, and victory over it, and can most deny the flesh its unjust desires ; that are mean in their own eyes, and seem fitter

to themselves to learn than to teach, in honour preferring one another; that are most sensible of the excellency of the unity of the church, and Christ's order therein; and therefore most abhor division and unjust separations; and that most willingly obey their overseers in the Lord, and submit to their just guidance, and love one another; that have the sweetest and most serious use of God's ordinances, and the greatest delight in God himself, and readiness to die; these are they that have most of the Spirit: but, alas! most that now boast of it, to the contempt of their guides, how far are they from this state! What railing accusations do they fill their writings and speeches with, most unlike to the language of the Spirit of Christ. What impotent slaves are they to their passions; and what proud boasters, and what despisers of government, unruly and disobedient.

20. Lastly, consider whether it be not a most vile abuse of the Spirit of God, to make it a patron and shelter of idleness; besides the other fore-mentioned evils. God sets men to search the Scriptures, to seek, and cry, and dig for knowledge; to inquire of teachers and one another; to meditate and study the Scripture day and night, that their profiting may be known to all: and these wretched souls will not only disobey God, and indulge their flesh by ease and idleness, thinking these laborious studies too dear a price to pay for knowledge, or too hard a means to use in subserviency to the Spirit; but besides this carnal contempt of the light, they will reproach those that are more diligent and studious than themselves, and most impudently lay their own fault on their teachers; calling them, 'Lazy drones and idle;' because they spend their life and strength in most laborious studies, and searching of the Scripture, and because they do not leave this work to go to thresh or plough, as if that were the harder and more needful work for them that have set their hands to the plough of Christ: and, yet, which is the very top of their wickedness, they dare father all this upon the Spirit; as if labour and study were needless, because they have the Spirit. Is it not enough for you to despise God and his word by your fleshly ease and idleness, refusing to study and meditate on Scripture day and night, but you must also blame them that are at more pains than yourselves; yea, impudently blame them for your fault of idleness; yea, and pretend the Spirit for all this wickedness. No wonder if God be avenged on such dealings, by giving you up to a spirit, that

indeed doth befriend and own your own course. In the first part, you imitate the ungodly world, who will not only refuse godliness themselves, as too grievous to their flesh, but also reproach them that will not do so too; and so you will not only refuse the pains of studying the word and works of God, but reproach those that refuse it not as you do; but then you doubly exceed other ungodly ones, for they are not so shameless as to charge the godly, just with their own crime of profaneness, much less to father their wickedness on God's Spirit.

I know you use to allege that of Christ to his disciples, "Take no thought what to answer, for in that hour it shall be given you." But consider, 1. This was part of the extraordinary gift of the Spirit, proper to those times for the sealing up of Scripture. Those apostles had the use of languages without study; must not we, therefore, study for them? who then should have translated you the Bible? 2. What, if God encourage us yet, to take no thought what to answer a persecutor, or (as Dan. iii.) "not to be careful to answer them in that matter, as trusting Christ with our cause and lives;" doth it follow, that, therefore, we must take no thought what to preach or pray, or how to understand the word aright; when Scripture hath expressly commanded the contrary: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, (what time then shall we have to thresh?) that thy profiting may appear to all: take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, and continue therein; for in doing this (in this painful way of study, and not in idleness) thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. iv. 15; 2 Tim. ii. 15; Josh. i. 8, Psalms i., ii., cxix. 97, 99; 148, and cxliii. 5.)

I have said more than at first I intended on this point, because of our sad experience of the common abuse of such conceits of the spirit, and because of the lamentable success which the deceiving spirit now hath through this nation; such as I scarce ever heard, or read of in any credible history.

Yet again I will say, that there is no reason in all this, why any should deny the Spirit in the saints, or think that all do falsely pretend to it because some do, or that there is no such thing because some falsely boast of it: the best things may be abused, and the abuse of them is most dangerous. The Spirit saveth some, but is falsely pretended to by others; even as the name of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, is made by wicked men the common cloak for their sins, and they pretend them-

selves to be Christians and God's servants, as confidently as those that are so. But it doth not thence follow, that God hath no servants on earth, or that there are no true Christians. What, if the devil, who is an enemy to God, will say he is God, and engage witches and wicked men to worship him as God, (as in the heathen idols he did,) will you, therefore, say that there is no God, because of the devil's false pretences? So what if the same devil transform himself into a spirit of light and righteousness, and so go forth, and be a lying spirit in the mouths of deluded ones, and say that he is the Spirit of God, will you, therefore, conclude that there is no Spirit of God? Then you let the devil have his will, if he can so far wrong the Spirit, and blind you to your destruction.

Sect. XXIV.

I should add here yet one other use of the point in hand. If the Spirit of holiness be such a witness to Christ, and such an advantage to the soul, against all temptations to infidelity, then you may see that all quenching and grieving the Spirit of grace, hath a tendency to infidelity itself, and doth obscure Christ's testimony that is within us, and so weaken our faith. And, therefore, what wonder if loose and careless professors of Christianity do stagger at the truth of God's word, or be weak in the belief of it? And what apparent need is there that all Christians should be very obedient to the Spirit, and take heed of the frame of their hearts and lives, lest they roll themselves into infidelity before they think of it, or know where they are. By these several ways, doth wilful sinning, and neglect of our hearts and lives, lead men towards infidelity itself.

1. By blotting out that evidence which was within them, of the truth of Christ, and so leaving it so dark, that they can hardly discern it. When they have weakened, and blurred their own graces, and too much defaced the image of Christ within them, then it is easier than before to bring them to doubt whether the Gospel have such noble effects: whether grace be so real a prevailing power: whether it be any more than the fruit of men's education or industry, or some melancholy disposition, or accidental and common alteration on the mind? They can judge of it sensibly no otherwise than as they find it themselves, and weak grace is next to none. And thus they lose their precious advantages, and lay open their souls to the vilest of temptations.

2. A careless life and wilful sinning do tend to infidelity,

by weakening the faith itself by which they should believe. Not only blotting Christ's evidence within them, but also blinding their own eyes, and disabling themselves from that act by which it must be discerned. For as all other graces, so faith itself will decay, as the strength of sin increaseth. No wonder, then, if such complain of blasphemous suggestions, and darkness of evidence of the truth of the word, and that they are assaulted with doubtings about it, when they have cast this dust into their own eyes, or drawn this web over them. It must be a clear eye that must discern supernatural mysteries, and the things of another world. Had you obeyed Christ and his Spirit, in holy diligence, and an even conversation, you might have had all your graces thrive, and faith with the rest, and so have been better able to believe; and then that would have appeared an evident truth to you, which now you look at with wavering doubtfulness.

3. When men have taken to a course of wilful sinning, they grieve and quench that Spirit which must help them in believing, and therefore no wonder if they believe but weakly, without this help. I do not here consider the Spirit objectively, as I did before, in the fruits of it, but efficiently or actively, as that which must breathe upon his own graces, and assist the soul in the very exercise of them. How can you look when you have dealt so unkindly with the Spirit, that it should keep back the tempter, or clear your eyes and help your faith? What wonder if that faith be weak which is a fruit of the Spirit, when you have so far provoked the Spirit himself to depart? You make but an ill combat with the tempter, if you drive away this guide. If you defile his house and temple, no wonder if he leave you in the dark.

4. If you once take to a course of wilful sinning, you will contract such a love to your sin, that it will breed an unwillingness in you (so far as it prevails) to believe the word of God to be true; because you would not leave your sin, you will be loth that word should prove true, that would separate you from it. (John iii. 19.) When men's deeds are evil, no wonder if they love darkness rather than light: and your wills do much to master your understanding.

5. By wilful sinning you wound the conscience, and bring yourselves again under the terrors of God, and darken the evidences of your interest in his special love, and bring yourselves into doubting of your own salvation. And all this hath a plain

tendency to infidelity: for if once you find your condition so sad, you will begin to wish that God's threatenings were not true, that so they might not fall upon yourself. When you once think, that if God's word be true, you are undone, it will sorely tempt you to wish it were not true. And if you do but once wish it false, the devil may the more easily tempt you to believe it is false: for he hath a great advantage when he hath got so much room in a man's will. And a man will far more easily believe what he would have to be true, than what he would not: experience tells us this. It is a great power that the will hath upon the understanding in judging and believing. It will cause a man to study for reasons to delude himself, and take a seeming reason for current, and gladly hearken to any one that will seduce him, by speaking that which he would have to be true. It will make him snatch at any show of an argument, and stop his ears against all that is said against it. It will make him look on the clearest evidence for truth, with so much prejudice and passion, that it will be unlikely to convince him, till God shall set in for the penal manifestation of his justice, or by a gracious conviction for his recovery.

Hence it is that we so ordinarily find, that a galled conscience by wilful, heinous sin, is as great a leader of men to infidelity, as the mere force of the most subtile, argumentative deceits. When a man that seemed religious, and believed in a sort that Scripture was true, shall secretly or openly live in whoredom, drunkenness, deceit, and unjust gain, or any the like wasting, crying sin, when conscience is still gnawing him, and frightening him with the thoughts of judgment and everlasting fire; so that the man must needs believe one of the two, either that Scripture is false, or that he is in danger of being undone for ever: no wonder if he choose the former, and turn his ear to seekers and infidels, and pick up some crumbs of comfort from their dung. Men are naturally loth to judge hardly of themselves, or to believe that which is against them, and concludeth them miserable. They first consider what they would have to be true, before they consider what is true indeed; and by such foolish devices they keep up a little quiet in their minds for a while, and keep off the terrors of execution by persuading themselves that there will be no assize. But, O how short, how sad a kind of ease is this! How much better were it, to open the windows of the soul, and freely let in the light of Christ, and patiently consider of the worst, while there is remedy, and believe the threatening, while

the execution may be prevented, than to find it all remedilessly true, when it is too late. Ignorance or unbelief of certain danger is a poor way of escape. If it were but a sudden death that made an end of them it were some ease to die unexpectedly, and not to know or believe till they feel the stroke; for then the foregoing fears would be put by; but this will be the increase of a perpetual misery, when men shall have everlasting leisure to review their folly, and to bethink themselves that they might have escaped if they would have believed the danger in time, and so have applied themselves for the prevention.

Sect. XXV.

Hence, also, you may further see how incompetent judges ungodly men are of the truth of Scripture and christian religion, and how little the contradiction of such opposers should be regarded. You see how incapable an unsanctified heart and a wicked life do make them of a sound, effectual belief, till God set in with his special grace; and, therefore, if multitudes of such, both Jews and heathens, believe not the Gospel, but oppose and persecute it, it is no wonder. If you say, 'This is to disclaim all witnesses but those of your own mind; why may not other men see the truth of your Gospel, if it be true indeed?' I answer: it is not to disclaim men because they are not already of our mind, but because, by a vicious heart and life, they made it so easy for themselves to be deceived. If Christ's doctrines were but as the common precepts of philosophy, which man's nature and carnal interest did little contradict, then you might indeed think that one man might as well believe it as another; but Christ comes with his doctrine as a physician, to heal and save men's souls, and therefore finds them all that he comes to, under those diseases which have a contrariety and loathing of his medicines accompanying them. The temper of their corrupted hearts is against his truths. It is no more wonder if such believe not in Christ, than if a sick stomach abhor or cast up its physic. If the philosophers themselves affirm, that young men of untamed passions are unmeet auditors of moral philosophy, we may well say that carnal men of earthly, blinded minds, and unmortified lusts, are unmeet judges of christian verities; and such were all that ever rejected or opposed Christianity. It is true that those which were converted by it were ill judges of this doctrine too, till God enlightened them; but free-grace did, by the word, cause them to believe the word, and so make them

more able to discern between truth and falsehood, in matters of that nature, for the time to come.

Sect. XXVI.

Lastly, it is hence apparent also, that the way to have the firmest belief of the christian faith, is to draw near and taste, and try it, and lay bare the heart to receive the impression of it, and then, by the sense of its admirable effects, we shall know that which bare speculation could not discover. Though there must be a belief on other grounds first, so much as to let in the word into the soul, and to cause us to submit our hearts to its operations, yet it is this experience that must strengthen it, and confirm it. "If any man do the will of Christ, he shall know that his doctrine is of God." (John vii. 17.) The melody of music is better known by hearing it, than by reports of it; and the sweetness of meat is known better by tasting, than by hearsay; though upon report we may be drawn to taste and try. So is there a spiritual sense in us of the effects of the Gospel on our own hearts, which will cause men to love it, and hold it fast against the cavils of deceivers, or the temptations of the great deceiver.

So much of this witness within us, as far as concerneth our present design, viz., the strengthening of believers against temptations to infidelity.

And oh, that my dear Redeemer would pour out upon my soul a fuller measure of his Spirit, to enlighten and enliven me, and make me more conformable to his image and will, and to keep continual possession within me for himself; that I might always bear about me a living, effectual testimony of Christ in my breast; and may have yet more of this advantage against temptations, which I have here opened unto others: and whatsoever I have spoken mistakingly of this Spirit, or defectively and unworthily of its admirable, curious, and yet unsearchable works, the Lord of mercy forgive it, with the rest of my transgressions, in the blood of his well-beloved!