

THOUGHTS
ON
THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND
HIS WORK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THOUGHTS UPON THOUGHT."

“ Πάντα δὲ ταῦτα Ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ !

1 COR. xii. 11.

δε γνωσιν καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος κατέχομεν, ὅτι
ὥσπερ ὁ υἱὸς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς, οὕτω καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα πλήν τε δὴ τῆς τρέψεως
”

JUST. MART.

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PREFACE.

THE topics of the following pages have engaged the attention, and impressed the heart of the writer, as subjects of vital importance to the genuine Christian. It must not be concealed, that there has been lately introduced into this country, a style of writing and preaching in which the existence and work of the Holy Spirit have *not* been *denied*; but which tends greatly to neutralise the effects which these doctrines ought to have on the experience and practice of Christians. To speak out plainly, there has been a large infusion of semi-neology, into our otherwise evangelical theology. The deity and atonement

of Christ have been taught, vindicated, and enforced,—the glory of Christ has been avowed as the ultimate object of all Christian effort,—the sinner has been taught that there is salvation in no other,—while the Spirit, whose special office is to “glorify Christ,” and to allure the sinner to him, has scarcely been named, or, when named, not exhibited as he is, an ever-living and ever-working Spirit; but as an *influence entombed in the word*, which the assumed vitality of the sinner is to quicken and to call into vigorous exercise. These sentiments, the writer ventures to think, are as much opposed to the doctrines which distinguished apostolic preaching, as they are detrimental to the work of conversion, and the growth of individual piety. Not less unproductive of corn or precious fruit, are those spots of our earth where no tillage of man, nor cheering beam of sun, nor gentle rain, are known, than are those congregations destitute of the fruits of the Spirit, where these withering doctrines are preached.

On the other hand, not more beautiful and rich is the garden of precious fruits, than is the congregation where the doctrines of the existence and work of the Holy Spirit are the

PREFACE.

frequent topics of public discourse, and his influences are constantly and earnestly sought. Many witness the delightful effects, and wonder what can be the cause; neither depth of erudition, nor force of reasoning, nor tenderness of pathos, nor charm of eloquence, can account for it, for they are not there; and where all these exist, and the work of the Spirit is not introduced, similar results cannot be found; yet when they do exist, and the Spirit's aid is implored, and the necessity of his agency inculcated, there are sinners converted, and there are saints becoming more and more like their God. The ministers honoured as the instruments in bringing about these triumphs, will ever be prepared to ascribe them, not to the enticing words of man's wisdom, but to the demonstration of the Spirit, and to the power of God. This view of the Spirit's work, instead of inducing any relaxation of exertion, will give vigour and courage to the feeblest labourer in the work of the Lord.

Every soul's conversion is a special act of the Spirit of God. Of the honour of this work he is jealous, and his glory he will not give to another. One principle, upon which the Spirit invariably proceeds, is that which is

applicable to the moral government of God in general, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." The private Christian realises this truth in his own spiritual prosperity abounding, as he lives in communion with the Spirit; and the Christian who is more conspicuous by his activities in the cause of Christ, realises this truth in the success with which his efforts are crowned. Who can imagine the honour which God will put upon the man, who, having spent his life in sowing the seed of Divine truth, but ever seeking and expecting the influences of the Spirit, reaps a large harvest of immortal souls, and amidst the acclaim of angels, appointed to some exalted station in the heavenly world, shall hear the voice of the Eternal say, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom I delight to honour?"

The design of this work is, in the former parts, to exhibit the doctrines of the primitive church in relation to the nature of the Holy Spirit, and his various operations on the human heart; and, in the latter part, to present an encouraging motive to Christians to continue and increase their exertions for the

diffusion of the Gospel, where it has not been known, or where its transforming power has not been realised. The feeblest effort becomes effective, when allied by faith and prayer with the omnipotence of the Spirit. The very characteristic of the dispensation under which we live, should be an inducement to more vigorous exertion and more fervent prayer that the heathen may be given to Christ "for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."

An apology is due to the religious public for the delay that has been occasioned between the announcement of this volume and its being ready for delivery. Providential occurrences, over which the writer had no control, prevented that careful attention to his manuscript, and that prompt superintendence of the press, which he desired and anticipated at the announcement. Among those occurrences may be noticed a long missionary tour, personal indisposition, and a removal from his former residence, all of them facts inimical to close application and critical attention. This statement the author hopes will be deemed an ample because the only appropriate apology.

At the time this work was first announced, the excitement of theological controversy was at its highest point. It has greatly abated. The calm that has succeeded may in a measure be favourable to a more deliberate investigation of the important questions at issue. A prayerful spirit will be a most efficient helper in arriving at truth, while a disputatious temper will often prove a great hinderance. Upon topics involving great principles there cannot be too much dependence on that Agent, who, among other gracious offices, has engaged to "lead into all truth," and to "take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us." Prayerful reliance on his guidance, and Berean diligence in searching after the truth, form the surest guarantee against wandering into the paths of error.

That every reader may be excited to more earnest prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,—that that Spirit may display more of his power in reviving his own sanctifying work where it has begun,—that many more may be brought under his renovating influence than in any former period of the history of the church,—that the beginning of a new era of light and purity may dawn on the

church and the world,—and that the glorious triumphs of the Spirit predicted in prophecy, may very soon become delightful facts of history, are among the happy results confidently anticipated, and the objects most fervently desired by

THE AUTHOR.

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THOUGHTS, &c.

PART I.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

SECTION I.

ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“Who hath directed the Spirit of JEHOVAH,
And, as one of his council, hath informed him?”

ISAIAH.

THE first momentum of any piece of machinery, determines the power and efficiency of every part of the machine. So the views entertained of the Holy Spirit, will impart a character to every system of theology. If these are scripturally correct, then will the whole system be harmonious; if these are erroneous, then will the whole system be confused and perplexing. Accurate views of the Holy Spirit are the basis of sound doctrine and intelligent Christian experience,—are essential to stability of principle, individual peace, and relative usefulness. The subject is one of immense importance, and is to be understood only by the

diligent and prayerful mind. Diligence here without prayer would be unavailing.

On this subject philosophy has no dogmas to lay down—unaided reason no lessons to inculcate. Revelation is the only instructress by whom the truths, relating to the Holy Spirit, are taught; and devout humility the only state of mind in which they are learned. The haughty reason,—the daring intellect,—the soaring imagination,—must here fall prostrate before the shrine of revelation; yea, the whole soul must become as a little child, in receiving the very rudiments of truth. In this study, nothing can compensate for the absence of a humble spirit. Diligent study, profound learning, varied acquirements, intelligent instructors, are comparatively useless to the student of this heavenly science, without humility. The more sublime the science, the deeper the humility required to receive it. Revelation addresses faith: faith and humility are twin sisters; they are ever equals in the school of Christ. The presence of these graces in the soul is the best guarantee for the attainment of spiritual knowledge. Revelation presents her ample volume to the children of men, and invites them to read: some look at it, and say, ‘We cannot read, because it is sealed;’ and others say, ‘We cannot read, because we are not learned.’ The reason each class assigns is true, though not in the sense in which the

excuse is made. One has not sought the aid of Him who alone can break the seal; the other has not learned of Him who is of "a meek and lowly spirit." With the lowly is wisdom: humble minds learn sublime truths—the deep things of God; while proud philosophers, "wise and prudent" in their own esteem, reject them as things hard to be understood. This, Jesus Christ knew from all eternity: it was among the verities shut up in his own bosom; but after sojourning on our earth for a season, and witnessing this truth exemplified in facts constantly occurring around him, as though he could no longer retain the emotions awakened, he burst forth into an expression of ardent thanksgiving, and rejoiced aloud, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." It is a law in Christ's school, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The lowliness of mind, which Christ honours, is not the companion of indolence and mental torpor; it is the humility of the child, combined with the persevering energy of the miner, digging for silver, and searching for hid treasure. No riches are so costly,—no treasures so precious, as those which a knowledge of the Holy Spirit reveals,—no science so sublime, as a knowledge of Him, who is the independent

source of all wisdom. There is a knowledge that puffeth up ; but it is the knowledge which has no relation to this subject. Knowledge is a constituent part of genuine piety. Feeling without knowledge is fanaticism ; and knowledge without feeling is stoicism ; and that knowledge which can blend with the highest order of hallowed feeling, is a knowledge of Him, who, in the consciousness of his own intuitive and underived stores, could challenge the whole intelligent universe, saying, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" This passage appears intelligible, only on the admission of the *personality of the Spirit*. Taking revelation as our only guide in all religious matters, we record it, "as our full conviction, that the Holy Scriptures, in the revelations which they furnish concerning God, represent the essential and characteristic properties of deity, as inherent in three subjects, which we distinguish by the names of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit ; and the ground of this distinction we call personality."

In attempting to treat on the personality of the Holy Spirit, much difficulty may be prevented, if the terms employed be defined. By a person is meant, *a being possessing intelligence, volition, power, and feeling, capable of acting from self-originated or suggested motives*. An intelligent capability of acting and being acted on, associated with distinct volition,

constitutes personality. The idea of *distinct personality* includes all the great principles common to every person, with all the peculiar attributes which distinguish one person from another. The distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, includes all the essential principles which are common to the Father, and the Son, with all the peculiarities which distinguish the Spirit from the Son, and from the Father. There are those, who deny the eternity of the Son, and believe in his personality; they also deny the personality of the Spirit, but believe in his eternity. The attribute of eternity, does not necessarily destroy the idea of distinct personality. It is affirmed that the Bible inculcates the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit.

I. *Because there are many portions of sacred writ in which this doctrine is implied.* On this, as on other important topics, the sacred volume is the only authority that is infallible and decisive. Patristic theology gives but a feeble and unsteady light, and too often proves a light that leads astray. On the contrary, the word of God is the heavenly light shining on every dark and mysterious topic, which it concerns man to know, and which unaided reason could not discover. In these rays there is nothing illusory: to dispel illusions, to make known great truths, and to correct errors, are the great objects contemplated by revelation. The teaching of the Divine word, is free from the ambiguity

and obscurity which too frequently characterise human productions. Yet, notwithstanding this characteristic of the sacred volume, some who deny the personality of the Holy Spirit, attempt to explain away those portions which bear on the subject, by maintaining that the Scriptures make a free use of the figure of speech called *prosopopœia*, and to this figure they refer most of those passages in holy writ which refer to the Holy Spirit. It is admitted that the sacred writers do frequently employ this figure; but the admission of the premises, does not necessarily involve the conclusion drawn from those premises. The legitimate use of the figure, is to give *prominence and beauty* to the truth exhibited, and never to enwrap the truth in the mists of obscurity, nor to awake a doubt in the mind of the reader, whether the language is used figuratively or not. It is employed to *elucidate*, and not to *mystify*. It is ever associated in the minds of the sacred writers, with a rigid regard to perspicuity, as in the bold and beautiful personification of the Divine attributes harmonising :

“ Mercy and Truth met together ;

Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.”

PSAL. lxxxviii. 10.

It is remarkable that most passages of sacred writ, in which instruction on the Holy Spirit is imparted, are written in a simple and unadorned style.

Although, in the book of Job, the phrase "his spirit," be found in the same category with attributes, yet it evidently implies the existence of distinct personality. "By his strength he foameth up the sea, by his skill he stilleth its pride, by his Spirit he adorneth the heavens, by his hand he formed the extended serpent."^a This has been attempted to be explained away, by maintaining that "his Spirit" is here expressive of a Divine attribute. The same method of invalidating the Divine testimony on this subject has been adopted towards that passage in Isaiah, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?"^b To suppose that the phrase, "the Spirit of the Lord," means nothing more than the Divine attribute of intelligence or wisdom, is to suppose that the sacred writers, in conveying instruction on this most important topic, adopt a method very different from that by which their instructions on other subjects are uniformly characterised. The supposition being correct, it might be expected that some parallel might be found. Instead of this, it stands altogether isolated in its style. For in no part of the Bible is there any resemblance to inquiries like these, "Who hath guided omnipotence, taught omniscience, instructed wisdom, or counselled goodness?" And yet

^a Job xxvi. 12, 13.

^b Isaiah xl. 13.

such phraseology would appear necessary to corroborate the above mode of interpreting Scripture. If the phrase, "the Spirit of the Lord," be understood as implying a distinct personality, it would be more in accordance with the general tenor of Scripture, and no violence would be done to the grammatical construction of the particular passage.

In the account of the creation, intimations are given of distinct personalities in the blessed Elohim. In the consultation anterior to the formation of man, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." The personality of the speaker admitted, that of the audience would in this case necessarily follow, because here, equality of intelligence and capability of acting are implied.

It is also written, "the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." Here the acting of an intelligent agent appears to be recorded; yet this record, according to the neological rules of interpreting Scripture, means "a strong wind went forth." This method of interpretation, if carried out, would be fatal to some of the sublimest truths of revelation,—the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, reducing them to mere refinements on ancient heathenism. Many heathen writers,* some who made creation the subject of their treatises,

* Grotius, lib. i. cap. xvi. De Testimoniis Extraneorum.

and others who made it the theme of their poetry, plainly show that in their approaches to sound theological views, they left many who in the present day have greater advantages, and make louder professions, at an immense distance. Their frequent allusions to the brooding dove, accompanied with demonstrations of infinite power, at the formation of the world, proclaim their belief in a distinct personality being set forth in the phrase under consideration. The weight of such evidence might be regarded as very little, were it not for the fact, that they derived their views of creation from their intercourse with the believers in revelation, who were their cotemporaries. And the faith of those who then believed, would, in all probability, be more simply scriptural, than the faith of those, who at a subsequent period, were in danger of being corrupted by the glosses of human philosophy.

Another passage, which has been resolved by some into a mere emphatic mode of expression, may now be noticed.^b “And the Lord Jehovah hath sent me and his Spirit.” The connexion which this passage has with an acknowledged prediction of the Messiah, ought to have secured for it an interpretation different from that which tends to nullify the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit. The verse immediately follow-

^b Isaiah xlviii. 16.

ing represents the blessed Trinity announcing distinct personality and unity of design, "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."^a Why this peculiar mode of announcement? for emphasis, or elegance, does not seem a reason sufficient to account for this thrice repetition of the sacred name. It is submitted with deference, whether the more reasonable solution of the question, will not be found in the admission, that the passage is an enunciation of three distinct persons in the Godhead. Similar forms,^b with slight variations, of announcing the hallowed Elohim frequently occur in the writings of Isaiah. By the same prophet, the Holy Spirit is represented as *suffering* and *acting*, two attributes of personality. "And they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit; so that he became their enemy, and he fought against them."^c Rules of criticism, that interpret "Holy Spirit" as a synonyme for mind or feeling, might easily explain away any doctrine, however plainly inculcated in the word of God. In the passage under consideration, the Holy Spirit is represented as opposed and vexed, which representation corresponds with other parts of revealed truth,^d and becomes plain and consistent on the admission of the

^a Isaiah xlviii. 17.

^b Isaiah xl. 28; xliii. 3; xlv. 6; xlv. 11; xlix. 7; cum multis aliis.

^c Isaiah lxiii. 10.

^d Genesis vi. 3; Ephesians iv. 30.

personality of the Spirit. To the above, many other passages from the Old Testament, in which the personality of the Spirit is *implied*, might be added ; but the New Testament supplies more copious evidence of this kind. And, incidental evidence is sometimes more weighty, than that which is formal and direct. The distinct personality of the Spirit, was one of those doctrines which had been left for Christ and his disciples to make more fully known to the world. The evangelists abound in allusions^e corroborative of this doctrine. The whole of the Saviour's valedictory address, contained in the fourteenth, and two following chapters in the Gospel by John, may be regarded as heavenly instruction on this important topic ; and as a general observation on the whole, it may be remarked, that the advent of the Spirit being posterior to, and consequent on, the Saviour's death, the distinct use of the *masculine* pronouns^f throughout this discourse in relation to the Spirit, and the offices assigned to the Spirit, all concur to impress the mind with the idea of distinct personality. The apostolic teaching clearly showed in whose school they had been taught. They wrote and spake of the Spirit, as if they had never had a doubt of his personality, and as though, on this point, they did not

^e Luke i. 35 ; iv. 1—14 ; John i. 32.

^f 'Ο, αὐτός, ἐκεῖνος, masculine pronouns, are continually used in these chapters, although πνεῦμα is a neuter noun.

imagine a doubt could possibly arise in the minds of those whom they instructed. They speak of the Holy Spirit as of an agent with whose operations they were well acquainted. Hence they speak of "being led by the Spirit," "walking in the Spirit," "the Spirit of God dwelling in them as the temples of the Holy Ghost." They speak of the aid they receive from the Holy Spirit. "Through whom we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." And the closing invitation of inspiration implies the personality of the Spirit, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come." And upon further investigation of the Bible, it will be found,

II. *That the sacred Scriptures recognise certain acts performed by the Holy Spirit, which amount to positive declarations of his personality.* At a very early period in the history of man, the action of the Spirit on the human mind is recognised: "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always *strive* with man."^a And at a subsequent period, when more light had been revealed on this subject, the same truth is declared by Stephen, when addressing the Jews. "Ye do always *resist* the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do ye."^b

The restoration of the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the Jews under Zerubbabel their prince, appears to

^a Gen. vi. 3.

^b Acts vii. 51.

be ascribed to the presiding wisdom and active agency of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."^c

The work of instructing the church has ever been performed by the Spirit,—seers, prophets, and apostles ascribe their visions and revelations of truth to him. Hence David begins that short but beautiful ode, in which the dying king, shows himself the believing saint. "The Spirit of the Lord hath spoken by me, and his word upon my tongue. The God of Israel said, to me the Rock of Israel spake."^d The prophet Ezekiel abounds in testimonies of this class, recognising the Spirit, in all the visions and revelations which were made to him. Among those testimonies are the following :—"And the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me."^e "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord."^f Nehemiah, when recounting the goodness of God, says, "Thou gavest *thy good Spirit* to instruct them. Thou testifiest against them by *thy Spirit* through thy prophets."^g Also the prophet Zechariah : "The words which the Lord of hosts sent by his Spirit through the former prophets."^h

^c Zech. iv. 6.

^d 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3.

^e Ezekiel iii. 14.

^f Ezekiel xxxvii. 1.

^g Neh. ix. 20, 30.

^h Zech. vii. 12.

When Peter addressed his fellow-disciples soon after the ascension of Christ, he prefaced his quotation from the Psalms, saying, "This Scripture, which the *Holy Spirit* predicted by the mouth of David."^a And whenever the apostles quote from the Old Testament^b it is according to the above formula, viewing the Scriptures as the *thinkings* and *sayings* of the Holy Spirit. And this view was conveyed by the Apostle Peter when he told the churches, "That the prophecy of former times came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake, actuated by *the Holy Spirit*."^c The true church of Christ in every age has regarded the Scriptures as the voice of *the Spirit*.

The arrangements and appointments in the church, are ascribed to the independent volition of the Holy Spirit. The ordination of the apostles Barnabas and Saul to the work of the ministry, is left on record as the direct act of the Spirit. "And while they were ministering to the Lord, and fasted, *the Holy Spirit* said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So they, being *sent forth* by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia."^d When Paul addressed the elders and pastors,^e assembled together at Miletus,

^a Acts i. 16.

^b Acts xxi. 11 ; xxviii. 25. Heb. iii. 7.

^c 2 Pet. i. 21.

^d Acts xiii. 2, 4.

^e Although the word elders is used in the 17th verse, when describing those who were called to this assembly, yet the use of

he reminds them of the origin of their commission :
 “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit *hath made* you overseers.”^f
 In all their journeyings and labours, the apostles made *the will* of the Spirit the rule of their conduct. At one time they said, “It *seemed good to the Holy Spirit.*”^g And this was sufficient to account for their arrangements in an important affair. At another time, they “were *forbidden* by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. And when they attempted to go into Bithynia, the Spirit *suffered* them not.”^h
 When the prophet Agabus delivered his prediction, in reference to the persecutions which should happen unto Paul, he recognised the mind of the Holy Spirit in this matter. Having bound his own hands and feet with Paul’s girdle, he said, “Thus *saith* the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews bind the man that owneth this girdle.”ⁱ On the same subject the apostle says, “That the Holy Spirit *testified* in every city, *saying* that bonds and afflictions abide me.”^k
 The spiritual gifts and endowments of apostles, and believers, are acknowledged as the results of his own

ἐπισκόπους clearly shows that *elders* and *bishops* were different names for the same office. And to that office the *Holy Spirit appoints* in the exercise of his own prerogative.

^f Acts xx. 28.

^g Acts xv. 28.

^h Acts xvi. 6, 7.

ⁱ Acts xxi. 11.

^k Acts xx. 23.

independent volition. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, *dividing* to every man severally as *he will*."^a

All the susceptibilities of an intelligent and distinct personality are recognised as belonging to the Holy Spirit. The exhortation—"grieve not the Holy Spirit,"—plainly ascribes the susceptibility to the Holy Spirit, common to every intelligent person. When the apostle is speaking of the triumphs of the Gospel in Thessalonica, he introduces the phrase, "with joy of the Holy Spirit,"^b as though the power of the Holy Spirit, which had induced the reception of the Gospel, had not been expended in vain; but the Holy Spirit realised a hallowed joy and satisfaction at the results he witnessed.

The assistance of the Christian in every stage of his experience is assigned to the Holy Spirit. He quickens,^c into newness of life; he instructs,^d guides,^e helps,^f comforts,^g and matures,^h the Christian character. Without violating the most legitimate and obvious rules of Scripture interpretation, it appears almost impossible, after an impartial examination of the above passages, to arrive at any other conclusion than this,—that the personality of the Holy Spirit, is a doctrine taught

^a 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^d John xiv. 26.

^e John xiv. 26.

^b 1 Thess. i. 5—6.

^c John xvi. 13.

^h Phil. i. 6.

^e John vi. 63.

^f Rom. viii. 26.

by the Sacred Scriptures. And it is no small consolation to the believer to know, that as his justification is completed by the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ, so his sanctification is secured by the continued operations of the Holy Spirit; and that as all legal difficulties to the salvation of the soul have been removed by the work of Christ, so will all the remains of depravity,—the moral difficulties to salvation,—be extirpated, and the lineaments of the Divine likeness be developed by the work of the Holy Spirit, until the soul is filled with all the fulness of God. Since this gracious agent is ever present and directs his special attention to the state of the heart, and on his benign influence our happiness and the honour of religion depend, it becomes us to maintain a prayerful vigilance against those tempers and dispositions, which are offensive to this invisible but constant friend to our spiritual prosperity. To the foregoing evidences of the personality of the Holy Spirit might be added others, which prove alike his deity and personality; but they are omitted in this place, as they will necessarily come under consideration in the following section.

SECTION II.

ON THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“The Holy One of Israel.”—ISAIAH.

THROUGHOUT the preceding section, it will be found that the passages of sacred writ, which were selected to sustain the doctrine of the *Personality* of the Holy Spirit, are equally forcible in their bearing on his *Deity*. And it is presumed that the evidences of the deity of the Holy Spirit about to be adduced, will be equally confirmative of his personality. Among those who deny the deity of the Holy Spirit, and yet profess to believe the Bible, we usually find an equally bold denial of the personality of the Spirit, associated with attempts to resolve all that is said of the Spirit into the exercise of some Divine attribute,—most frequently that of Divine power,—thus attempting to invalidate the whole doctrine of the sacred Trinity. In attempting to show that the Spirit is not a mere quality, influence, or attribute, it was necessary to select such evidence as was found in the revealed word relating to the doctrine of the sacred Trinity; and thus, by implication, to

admit the doctrine of the deity and full equality of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, with the Father. It will be found that the sources of such evidence, are by no means exhausted. The personality of the Spirit having been thus fully set forth, as the doctrine of sacred Scripture, it might appear desirable to admit the doctrine of his deity as a necessary consequent. But as direct evidence of this truth seems to be abundantly afforded, it may be reasonably inferred, that the doctrine appears to be of sufficient importance to deserve a separate and full investigation.

The deity of the Father is generally admitted by all who believe in a Divine revelation. And if, apart from the Divine essence, the attributes ascribed to God the Father, are the peculiar characteristics of deity—and by attributes possessed, all beings are known,—then it necessarily follows, that any being to whom attributes which exclusively belong to God, are ascribed, must be equally God. It is therefore assumed, *that the sacred Scriptures uniformly ascribe Divine attributes to the Holy Spirit, and thus teach the doctrine of his deity.*

The oracle of nature, like those of Greece, sometimes speaks in ambiguous terms, or half-formed sentences, leaving the anxious devotee to construe or supply the meaning, according to his own inclination. At other times, nature is altogether silent, and refuses to answer; and this silence reigns, when questions involving

the deepest interests of God and man are proposed. Nature speaks loudly and plainly, and says, "There is a God:" this is her sublime discovery—her highest lesson. But when man seeks to know what God is—what are his attributes—what the appropriate object of his veneration, love, and hope,—to such inquiries nature is dumb. Man retires from nature's temple, saying, "None by searching can find out God—none can find out the Almighty to perfection." Revelation, like an angel of mercy, steps forward, spreads her scroll, writes on it, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." Revelation, pointing to this manifestation of the Divine character, invites us to read, believe, and live. For to know God is eternal life.

Among the attributes of deity ascribed to the Holy Spirit, is *Holiness*. Whatever may be the goodness and benevolence of God, he is a jealous God, and his glory he will not give to another. His incommunicable glory is not extraneous, but inherent,—not the extent of territory or domain over which he rules,—not the wonders he achieves, nor the praises he accepts,—but

the attributes he possesses. And among these, that which is most conspicuous, and adds its lustre to all the rest, is his *holiness*. By this attribute the Spirit is peculiarly distinguished, since the name by which he is invariably known, is, THE HOLY SPIRIT. Innumerable spirits exist: among them are the fallen spirits of angels, and the depraved spirits of men. Others there are of an opposite character,—angels which have kept their first estate, and “the spirits of just men made perfect.” These are holy; but their holiness is derived: the Holy Spirit is pre-eminently THE HOLY ONE,—inherently holy,—the source whence all the holiness in the universe is derived,—the great antagonist of sin in all its forms,—the mighty agent by whom holiness is diffused and sustained,—the sole purifier of a world of error, and moral defilement. Holiness is the attribute in which Jehovah delights. Hence he says, “My name is Holy.”^a The seraph-song, celebrating the Divine attributes, gives to holiness the precedence of the attributes of omnipotence and eternity, saying, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” That this attribute is set forth in holy writ, as the distinguishing attribute of the Spirit, cannot be doubted by any impartial student of the sacred volume. “*The Holy Spirit*”^b is his usual

^a Isa. lvii. 15. ^b John vii. 39; xiv. 26. Acts xiii. 2. Ephes. iv. 30.

appellation in the New Testament, and it is derived from the Old.^a Hence the terms "*thy Holy Spirit*," and "*his Holy Spirit*,"^b are in common use among the Jews. It is also submitted, that it would not do violence to the analogy of revelation, but considerably aid its ultimate object, if some of the passages, where the phrase "*the Holy One*" occurs, were interpreted "*the Holy Spirit*." Among passages of this class, may be noticed, these two, "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;" "Thus saith Jehovah, the Redeemer, and his Holy One."^c That the holiness ascribed to the Holy Spirit, is not to point out the work he performs, but to describe his nature, will appear from the apostolic statements, where the Holy Spirit is set forth as the God of the temple: "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are;" "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you?"^d The introduction of such language to a people recently delivered from idolatry, must be regarded as highly improper, if not absurd, were it not designed to teach the doctrine of the deity of the Holy Spirit, by ascribing to him the holiness which entitled him to the temple of the soul. Holiness

^a "Ἀνωθεν παρὰ Θεοῦ κατιοῦσα ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ἁγίους δωρεὰ, ἣν πνεῦμα ἅγιον ὀνομαζοῦσιν οἱ ἱεροὶ προφῆται."—Justin Martyr.

^b Psal. li. 11. Isa. lxiii. 10, רִיחַ קֹדֶשׁ, et רִיחַ קֹדֶשׁ

^c Isa. xlviii. 17; xlix. 7.

^d 1 Cor. iii. 17; vi. 19.

is further ascribed to the Holy Spirit, since the sanctifying, or making holy the church, is his special work. The apostle Paul, speaking of the triumphs of the Gospel among the Gentiles, says, "That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being *sanctified* by the Holy Ghost."^e Again, addressing the church at Thessalonica, says, "Brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through *sanctification* of the *Spirit*, and belief of the truth."^f Also in writing to Titus, he says, "But according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and *renewing* of the Holy Spirit."^g The Lord makes mention of his *holiness* as the reason for his sanctifying work, and as a motive for his people to strive after holiness. "For holy am I, Jehovah, who sanctifieth you." "Be ye holy, for I am holy."^h All the symbolic representations of the Holy Spirit intimate the purifying tendency of all his operations: the rushing wind,—the burning fire,—the purifying water. The Holy Spirit, in his own high prerogative, puts forth his holiness to sanctify and save from depravity and sin, continuing to impart, and yet remains the ever full and undiminished fountain of holiness.

Eternity,—is another attribute exclusively belonging

^e Rom. xv. 16.

^g Titus iii. 5.

^f 2 Thess. ii. 13.

^h Levit. xxi. 8. 1 Pet. i. 16.

to God, and is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, pointing out the efficacy of the blood of Christ as surpassing all that was shed under the Levitical dispensation, says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the *eternal Spirit*, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works?"^a Other portions of the word of God, give clear intimations of this attribute as belonging to the Holy Spirit, when he is represented as the author of revelation, and as identified with the *eternal purpose* of salvation. A purpose cannot have an existence anterior to mind, but if the purpose be eternal, much more must the mind which formed it be eternal.

Omniscience,—is attributed to the Holy Spirit by the sacred writers. It is scarcely possible to have correct views of the works he performs, without admitting his omniscience. The things of time and the things of eternity are alike the objects of his knowledge; the things of God and the things of men are ever known to him. "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."^b As the human mind is conscious of its own

^a Heb. ix. 14.

^b 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

thoughts, and all its knowledge and purposes ; so the Spirit of God, has a perfect intuition of all the stores of the eternal mind. His work in searching, cleansing, renewing the heart, involves the exercise of a knowledge of which no created intelligence can boast. And this knowledge, appears still more minute and extensive when his work as the Teacher, Intercessor, Witness, and Comforter of his people is considered, and in all these we are impressed with the thought, that we have to do with "Him who searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men." "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. For he who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the meaning of the mind, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."^c From him nothing is hid. His all-penetrating glance, pierces through the thickest and most specious folds of hypocrisy, and lays bare the inmost recesses of the soul. We may with propriety adopt the same language, in reference to his omniscience, which David adopts in relation to his all-pervading presence, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"^d

^c Rom. viii. 26, 27.

^d Psa. cxxxix. 7.

The attribute of *omnipotence* is also ascribed to the Holy Spirit. When Jehovah would remind his people of their obligations to serve him, and call upon them to renewed obedience, he says, "O thou who art called the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings?"^a The great encouragement of Zerubbabel in his onerous undertaking, amidst difficulties and opposition, arose from the agency and the energy of the Spirit, surpassing all the might and the power, that Israel had known, or history had recorded, "Not by force—nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."^b Evil spirits are subdued and expelled by the power of the Spirit. Hence Christ says, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."^c The origin and exercise of all the miraculous power, which attended the first apostolic efforts, are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. About to enter on their work, the apostles were assured by the Saviour, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."^d So that if they wrought miracles, they ascribed them to his omnipotence, saying, that "these mighty signs and wonders were done by the power of the Holy Ghost;" and if success attended the ministry of the Gospel, they ascribed it to "the power and demonstration of the

^a Micah ii. 7. ^b Zech. iv. 6. ^c Matt. xii. 28. ^d Acts i. 8.

Spirit." Nor are the evidences of his omnipotence confined to the records of the past; fresh displays of his resistless energy, are continually occurring around us, in the mighty and glorious changes he achieves, where every form of ignorance and depravity once existed. His power is exerted always for beneficial, and never for baneful results, so that his omnipotence seems to be comprehended in an ever-active panthiasance.^e As a skilful and mighty physician ever dwelling in our world, where moral maladies and death surround him, whithersoever he directs his energy, disease departs, death loses its grasp, releases its prey, and scenes of spiritual life and health proclaim his presence, and celebrate his healing,—saving power. The triumphs of the Gospel, are illustrations of his mighty power, beneath which every form of idolatry and wickedness has trembled, hearts of every grade of depravity, have bowed in willing subjection, and souls under every species of moral thralldom, have bounded into the freedom of the Gospel, testifying, that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Scarcely is there one attribute, which more com-

^e Some apology may be expected for the introduction of a new word; the most efficient apology the writer can present, will be to show its origin and meaning, πανθ (*panth*) is the adjective *all*, ιασαμην (*iasamen*) is a part of the verb ιαομαι (*iaomai*), to cure, to restore to health.

pletely embodies the idea of deity, than *sovereignty*, and this is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Sovereignty, which belongs alone to God, is the absolute right to will and to act, with the consciousness of supreme moral excellence, as the only rule. The Divine mind is its own law. This is sovereignty. All the volitions of a mind whose very nature is holiness, must necessarily be free from injustice and cruelty. All sovereign purposes of such a mind, must necessarily be benevolent and gracious. This is specially the sovereignty of the Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it *listeth*, and the sound of it you hear, but you know not whence it comes and whither it goes : so is every one born of the Spirit."^a Not only regeneration, but the subsequent process of grace on the heart, sanctification, is *equally* a display of the Spirit's sovereignty. The apostle, writing to the Thessalonians, says, "This is the *will* of God, even your sanctification," and then tells them, that they "are *chosen* unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit ;" thus making the act declarative of the pre-existing will, or purpose. The same attribute of sovereignty, is set forth in the bestowment of extraordinary gifts on the early Christians. "There are diversities of gifts, but it is the same Spirit ; and diversities of services, but the same Lord ; and diversi-

^a John iii. 8.

ties of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all *these* in all *persons*. But to each person is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good ; to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another is given the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit ; and to another, faith by the same Spirit ; and to another, the gifts of healings by the same Spirit ; and to another, the workings of miracles by the same Spirit ; and to another, prophecy ; and to another, the discernings of spirits ; and to another, the different tongues ; and to another, the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each individual as *he wills*." Here the endowments are so peculiar in their nature, and so ample in their variety, as to impress the mind that none but God could be their author. And here, the only rule by which they are regulated and bestowed, is declared to be the *absolute will* of the one Spirit. And this *absolute will*, is exercised in relation to the church, where God will be specially honoured. A more convincing evidence of the sovereignty and consequent deity of the Holy Spirit, than that which the foregoing paragraph of holy writ affords, we venture to think cannot possibly be required or imagined.

Before leaving this part of the subject, there is one other passage relating to the Spirit, well deserving consideration here ; a passage, which, according to a

well-known symbolic style, ascribes to him the all-comprehensive attribute of *perfection*, an attribute only predicable of Deity. In commencing the book of Revelation, the apostle John addresses his solemn salutation to the churches, "Grace unto you, and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from *the seven spirits which are before his throne*; and from Jesus Christ, that faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the sovereign of the kings of the earth."^a The remarkable phrase, "*the seven spirits which are before his throne*," bears forcibly on the important topic of this section; *seven*^b being pre-eminently the sacred number ordinarily used by oriental and scriptural writers to denote *completion*, it is a mode of expression, which might have been expected, in a book more distinguished for symbolical

^a Rev. i. 4, 5.

^b The Hebrew numeral שבע, seven, is derived from שבע, fulness. And in accordance with this use of the term *seven*, we read the language of the Apocalypse, describing Christ as having *seven horns and seven eyes*, Rev. v. 6, to denote a fulness of power, and the πληρωμα, or fulness of the Spirit. It is also said that "no man was able to enter into the temple, till the *seven plagues*," the full measure of tribulation, "of the seven angels were fulfilled." Rev. xv. 8. The Psalmist, speaking of the perfect purity of the sacred oracles, says they "are pure words, as silver purified *seven times*," completely purified. These and many other passages from the sacred oracles show that the symbolical use of the word *seven*, is to represent fulness or completion.

language, than any other in the sacred volume. According to this acknowledged rule of interpretation, and by the consent of writers^c skilled in oriental literature, the phrase, "*the seven spirits which are before his throne,*" is understood to mean **THE ALL-PERFECT SPIRIT.**"^d Every attribute belonging to God appears to be either distinctly ascribed to the Spirit, or implied in the works he performs, so that it seems impossible to arrive at any other conclusion than this, *that the sacred Scriptures teach the doctrine of the deity of the Holy Spirit.*

By a continued reference "to the law and the testimony," it will be found,

2. *That the Holy Spirit is equally the object of Divine worship with the Father and the Son.*

In the salutation the apostle John addressed to the churches, the invocation of the Divine blessing, divested of all the symbolical drapery in which it appears, would read thus: Grace and peace unto you, from God the Father, from God the Holy Ghost, and from God the Son. In perfect accordance with this sentiment, is the apostolic benediction at the conclusion of the

^c Lightfoot's Works, vol. iii. p. 333. Dr. Pye Smith's Testimony to the Messiah, vol. ii. pp. 557, 558, edit. 1821. Hewlett's Commentary, in loco. Dr. Hyde, "De Relig. Vet. Persarum," chap. viii. p. 158. Calmet's Dict. on the word "seven."

^d Isa. xi. 2. Zech. iii. 9; iv. 2, 10. Rev. ii. 1; v. 1; x. 3.

second epistle to the Corinthians : “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, Amen.”^a It seems almost impossible to arrive at any correct conclusion, what is the doctrine the sacred Scriptures teach, if the above passages, do not most plainly inculcate this truth, that the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son ; and that *He* is the recognised object of Divine worship,—the donor of spiritual blessings. The same view is sustained from the fact, that the apostles uniformly ascribe to the Holy Spirit all the glory and praise arising from their personal piety,^b miraculous endowments,^c and ministerial success.^d When Christ had risen from the dead, and resumed his supreme power, he gave his great commission to his apostles, to preach the Gospel, and to administer the solemn rite of baptism, in these words, “Go ye, therefore, and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ;”^e not in the *names*, but in the *name*, implying unity. The style of Christ’s teaching was remarkable for its plain and unambiguous character ; but if the Spirit be not God, this passage must ever stand as a memorable

^a 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

^b 2 Cor. i. 22 ; iii. 17, 18.

^c 1 Cor. xii. 4.

^d 1 Cor. ii. 4.

^e Matt. xxviii. 19.

specimen of incongruity in style and sentiment : but the deity of the Spirit being admitted, it harmonises with the whole of the Saviour's instructions. It is very difficult, to understand the degree of mental obliquity absolutely necessary, to deny the deity of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, when the deity of the Father has been granted. Is it possible that a healthy mind can read the passage, "Baptizing them in the name of God," and of a *creature*, and of an *attribute*, without discovering a discrepancy, which would be fatal to any human composition ? Yet this is the necessary alternative, on the rejection of the Divine personality of the Holy Spirit. That the full equality of the Holy Spirit, with the Son and with the Father, is a mystery, is granted. It is a truth declared on Divine testimony : all that belongs to the Divine nature and mode of subsistence must necessarily be mysterious. The Infinite, must ever be a mystery to the finite mind. And because the mysteries, which the unaided intellect of man could not fathom, have been revealed, the fact of their revelation on Divine authority, should be a powerful reason, why they should be believed, though they cannot be comprehended. Every inquiry into the works of nature, meets a boundary it cannot pass, and leaves much, which we readily believe on human testimony. Shall we then exercise a confidence in human authority, which we refuse to the Divine ? Is the Supreme

Being the only one, who is never to be credited on his bare testimony? Entire reliance on Divine authority can alone insure a healthy peace of mind. For we imagine, that to receive only some parts of revelation, and to reject others, would increase, and not diminish the difficulties, to the full exercise of an intelligent faith. All the facilities for knowing God, the truths revealed, the style of revelation, and the promised enlightenment, we owe entirely to his gracious condescension. May a devout docility, and an ardent gratitude, acknowledge and improve these facilities! May the inward evidence of the Holy Spirit's deity, be realised and enjoyed by you, dear reader; and then, amidst the ever-shifting winds of doctrine, shall you feel the hallowed calm which he only knows "who believeth, and hath the witness in himself."

Another circumstance, which strongly indicates the deity of the Holy Spirit, is,

3. *That sins against the Holy Spirit are represented as sins of extraordinary turpitude.*

There are some sins which are called sins against men,—“If thy brother sin *against thee*.” but this is a secondary view of sin, since that sin, whatever it might be relatively considered, must be a violation of the command of God, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Sin is the transgression of the law of God. God is the fountain of law; and, there-

fore, every sin is, primarily considered, against God. But there are sins against the Holy Ghost, which are marked with the utmost degree of infamy. The sin of Ananias is recorded as one of this class. No sin is, perhaps, more at variance with all the laws of social intercourse than the sin of lying,—it violates that confidence which is the very bond of society; yet the apostle Peter, addressing Ananias, said, “Why has Satan filled thine heart *to lie to the Holy Ghost*, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” And, as though designed to put the deity of the Holy Spirit, in a light too clear to be misunderstood,—the previous sentiment is reiterated, in this emphatic language, “Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast *not lied unto men, but unto God.*”^a Thus the sin is exhibited as one of extraordinary vileness, committed not against creatures, but against God,—against God the Holy Spirit, as the Origin and Promoter of all the holiness which exists. There is another instance, in which a sin against the Holy Spirit is marked in terms of the strongest indignation. When Simon Magus offered money as a price for the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, “Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be

^a Acts v. 3, 4.

purchased with money. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." It must be evident to the impartial reader, that the terms "Holy Spirit" and "God," refer to the same Being, and that the sin of Simon Magus, was a sin against the Holy Ghost.

The right of forgiveness, like the right of legislation, is the prerogative of God. Jesus Christ asserted his deity in the exercise of this right, when he said unto the sick of the palsy, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." And this he said, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath right^a on earth to forgive sins."^b This Divine prerogative extends its benign influence to sins of almost every grade; yea, no sinner, however numerous and aggravated his transgressions, feeling genuine compunction for sin, need despair of its gracious exercise. But there is a sin, which, from its extraordinary malignity and turpitude, places the transgressor beyond the reach of this gracious prerogative. We learn this solemn fact, from no enemy to our species,—from no delighter in human woe; but from Him who was an incarnation of truth and love,—from Him whose errand from heaven to earth was to dispense mercy to man, and render forgiveness available to the most guilty of our race,—even from Jesus the Saviour of sinners, we

^a ἐξουσίαν.

^b Luke v. 20, 24.

hear the solemn declaration, making known the fixed and unalterable purpose of the eternal mind: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Here is the comprehensive proclamation of forgiving mercy, and that mercy knows no limits, "except the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven unto men."^c This is not the place, to inquire into the nature, and peculiarities of the sin against the Holy Spirit. The solemn quotation, has been adduced, to illustrate the truth of the deity of the Holy Spirit. For it will necessarily follow, that if the Holy Spirit be not equal to God, he must be less, and by necessary consequence the sin against him less, and the pardon of the less more difficult than the greater, which is absurd; therefore he is not the less, but equal, since greater than God there cannot be, and, in consequence of his peculiar relation, to man in the work of moral restoration, the sin against him is unpardonable. It is deeply to be deplored, that there are divers doctrines, adverse to the deity of the Holy Spirit, propagated, to the damage of the evangelic truth and the prosperity of the church of Christ. Seeing the injuries already inflicted on the cause of truth, and the numerous evils which may be apprehended from the diffusion of deadly errors, it becomes every devout believer in this cardinal

^c Matt. xii. 31.

doctrine, fervently to unite in the prayer of the immortal Milton, when he said, "Thou, that sittest in light and glory unapproachable, Parent of angels and men ! next, thee I implore, omnipotent King, Redeemer of that lost remnant whose nature thou didst assume, ineffable and everlasting love ! and thou, the third subsistence of Divine infinitude, illumining Spirit, the joy and solace of created things ! one tri-personal God-head ! look upon this thy poor and almost expiring church, leave her not thus a prey to these importunate wolves, that wait and think long till they devour thy tender flock ; these wild boars that have broke into thy vineyard, and left the print of their polluting hoofs on the souls of thy servants. . . . Be moved with pity at the afflicted state of this our fallen monarchy, that now lies labouring under her throes, and struggling against the grudges of more dreaded calamities."

"Oh how much more glorious will those former deliverances appear, when we shall know them not only to have saved us from greatest miseries past, but to have reserved us for greatest happiness to come ! Hitherto thou hast but freed us, and that not fully, from the unjust and tyrannous claim of thy foes ; now unite us entirely, and appropriate us to thyself,—tie us everlastingly in willing homage to the prerogative of thy eternal throne. . . . Then, amidst

the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one, perhaps, may be heard offering high strains in new and lofty measures, to sing and celebrate thy Divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land, throughout all ages.^a Amen.”

^a Milton's Prose Works, pp. 20, 21.

PART II.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

SECTION I.

THE HOLY SPIRIT THE AUTHOR AND GIVER OF NEW LIFE.

“ Can these dry bones live ?”

EZEKIEL.

It does not comport with the ordinary laws of criticism, to make a single specific fact the basis of a doctrine that is general in its application. Yet, if it be found that a given doctrine is expressed, or implied in several portions of the sacred volume, then even an isolated fact, if it be found of the same class, may have its place among others to elucidate and confirm the doctrine in question. The motto at the beginning of this section is found in connexion with a most humiliating fact, in the history of the children of Israel. Their condition in Babylon, is described as politically and ecclesiastically dead ; and their restoration as impossible without the interposition of Omnipotent energy. Nor must it be forgotten, that this condition was the result

of moral delinquency. It is highly probable, that the scene was exhibited, for the purpose of directing attention to the moral cause of their present condition.

Facts, which occurred in the visions of the prophets, while the Divine afflatus was upon them, were the appointed media of conveying important truths. And while this and other reasons might induce the conviction, that the record of this fact was intended to convey the great doctrine of man's moral wretchedness,—as spiritually dead; yet if it were not so intended, it is, at least, an appropriate illustration of the whole question relating to that important doctrine. An impartial and docile investigation of the sacred volume, will furnish ample evidence,

That the uniform testimony of the sacred Scriptures is, that man is spiritually dead.

It is surprising in how many ways this truth breaks forth to the attention of the observing and thinking reader of the Bible. At one time it is expressed in a positive statement, or implied in the solemn confession or impressive fact; at other times it is set forth in the instructions of "the resurrection and the life," in the realities of a first resurrection, or in the grateful acknowledgments of the mighty change. All concur to teach us, that man, fallen man, is spiritually dead; as though the Spirit took pains to convey the unwelcome, the humiliating truth to our minds, and in a way that

should impress it on our hearts. In the days of innocence, God dwelt in the soul of man, as his chosen temple ; but at the entrance of sin God departed, and life of the highest order, and light of the purest kind, left man dead and dark. In Eden, where man lived in all the joyousness of life, he was forewarned of the consequence of his sin, that “ he should surely die.” It was but a small part of that sentence, that disease and care should enter where health and peace had dwelt,—that the scenes and possessions of paradise should be abandoned,—that toil and labour should be endured,—and that at last the soul should be untenanted and pass to unknown regions,—all this might have been apprehended as included in the sentence of death, and it would have been death comparatively without its bitterness ; but that God’s presence, love, and image should be withdrawn, this was death, indeed, in all its curseful character,—the death that only a soul could dread and feel,—the death most earnestly to be deprecated. Man sinned, and the truthfulness of God required that this death should be inflicted. This is the death man inherits. Nor is this inheritance the result of a tyrannical destiny ; it is the necessary consequence of our natural relation to our first parents. The voluntary concurrence of each individual confirms the sentence. He, who knows all causes, charges this home on his ancient people : “ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy-

self.”^a David, awakened to a new discovery of his sinful condition, felt that his moral wretchedness was so deep, and his destitution of spiritual life was so complete, that his only hope of restoration was in the creating power, the omnipotent grace of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, his prayer, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*” And, to express his earnestness for spiritual life, his petition is repeated, deprecating the absence of the Holy Spirit—the withdrawment of the Divine presence,—“*Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.*”^b In these petitions, the death of the soul is implied by the appeal that is made to the Author of life, whose creative energy alone was equal to meet the case.

And as though the Lord would make his own people understand, that he knew the propensity of the human heart to evade the humiliating truth, he speaks to them without a parable, or a vision, when he says, “*And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my SPIRIT in you, and ye shall live.*”^c Other portions of a similar bearing from the Old Testament might be adduced.

The testimony of the New Testament, on this doc-

^a Hosea xiii. 9.

^b Psa. li. 10, 11.

^c Ezek. xxxvii. 13, 14.

trine, is still more copious and explicit. That man is spiritually dead, was a solemn fact constantly present to the mind of Christ during his earthly sojourn. He came to our world, and the scene by which he was surrounded, must have occasioned no small portion of his sufferings : accustomed as he had been from all eternity to a region of life and holiness, it was in itself enough, to make him a man of sorrows, stricken with grief ; it was not a solitary valley, filled with the remains of death's triumphs, but a world filled with dead souls, the trophies of sin's power. He saw his own world had been transformed into one vast cemetery, and each intelligent being a distinct living tomb, bearing the inscription, " God has departed." There might be a difference in the date and dust of some, and in the shape and ornament of others, but all were graves. Even those of our race, who were supposed by some to possess the elements of life, and were so infatuated by a delusive self-flattery, as to assume a distinction on account of their spiritual pretensions, even these were seen by *him*, who sees men as they really are, as " whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones."

In the midst of this scene Jesus Christ stood, made known the burden of his heart, the design of his mission, and proclaimed his own character. " I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever

liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”^a And although Christ had from all eternity known the moral condition of man, yet there were occasions, when that condition pressed heavily on his tenderest pity, and his only relief arose from a reflection of his own infinite resources, and his benevolent design, and he said, “I am come that they might have life.”^b It might have been expected, that this gracious announcement would have been welcomed with the utmost cordiality, had it no other claim than that of its adaptation to the condition contemplated; yet this proffer of Almighty God, in the person of his Son, to repossess his rightful domain, and to impart life, is met with an apathy, which is to be accounted for, only from the painful fact, because “they have no life in them.”^c This is the solemn attestation of Him that cannot lie. On the other hand, the man who abandons his apathy, and receives the proffered boon, gives evidence that “he hath passed from death unto life.”^d The same truth was implied, when our Lord answered to one of his disciples, to whom spiritual life had been imparted, “Let the dead bury the dead.”^e As though the Saviour had said, “there are many others spiritually dead, who are competent to perform the office of burying the dead; but as thou hast been raised to life, go and proclaim life to a world

^a John xi. 25, 26.^b John x. 10.^c John vi. 53.^d John v. 24.^e Matt. viii. 22.

lying in the arms of death.” To the mind of every impartial reader, the above passages convey the humiliating truth, that every unsanctified man is spiritually dead. The Saviour saw that the union, which once existed between God and the soul, sin had dissolved,—that in consequence of this dissolution, the soul is destitute of the highest order of vitality, and that nothing short of his own omnipotent power and grace, could reinstate the soul with life, love, and happiness.

The testimony of the apostles, will be found in perfect harmony with the foregoing statements. The evidence of their piety, was expressed in unison with this doctrine. “Hereby we know, that we have passed from *death unto life*, because we love the brethren : he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.” Some of the terms used in the epistles, clearly show how the apostles understood the doctrine, and how they constantly recognised, and incorporated it, in all their communications, touching the condition of man in general, or their own experience in particular. Terms of this class, are found in the epistle to the Ephesians, in the description of the unconverted, “Having the understanding darkened, being *alienated^f from the life of God*, through the ignorance that is in them, because

^f The proper meaning of ἀπαλλοτριῶ, is, to depart very far off. In this sense it is sometimes used in the Septuagint.

of the blindness of their heart.”^a God has removed far from the soul, and that removal is in consequence of sin: death is thus incurred, and the victims of that death are said to be “dead in trespasses and sins.”^b The dispensation of grace is exhibited in contrast, and antagonist with the power and triumph of sin, “that, as sin hath reigned unto *death*, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”^c This death, is shown to be in no way at variance with the active rebellion, and antipathy against God, maintained by the unrenewed soul: it is its reality and its demonstration, “for to be carnally minded is death.”^d The death described, is found in alliance with intellectual attainments, moral consciousness, and sensibilities of a high order; and therefore the appeals and addresses of the Gospel, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.”^e The awful reality of spiritual death stands out, as a prominent truth of the sacred Scriptures. This truth understood and believed, all other truths harmonise with it;—this denied and rejected, innumerable and irreconcilable difficulties arise. Nor is this truth to be restricted to a portion of the human race: the inheritance of this spiritual death,

^a Ephes. iv. 18.

^b Ephes. ii. 1; Col. ii. 13.

^c Rom. v. 21.

^d Rom. viii. 6.

^e Eph. v. 14.

is identified with the inheritance of humanity. There is a spot in our world, where darkness hangs in perpetual gloom,—where no verdant herb, nor gay flower, greets the eye,—where no note of singing bird, nor sound of mirthfulness charms the ear,—where all that have life, once entering, go forth no more,—where bones of birds, beasts, and venturous, daring men, strew the length and breadth of the valley. It seems like the appointed sepulchre of earth—the charnel-house of nature, where silence, gloom, and death, had conspired to dwell and reign—as though it were the spot in our world, which the prince of darkness had selected, for holding his court, or training his destined subjects for the darkness of another world. Yet that dreary spot, is relieved by fields and groves of beauty, fragrance, and melody. But the spiritual condition of this world, presents a continuous scene of death, relieved only by an oasis here and there, like a garden of the Lord,—spots on which the reviving power, and the refreshing dews of the Spirit have descended. The immense territory over which death reigns, should supply a motive to Christians, to send the Gospel of life to the thousands and tens of thousands, who are perishing for lack of knowledge; and to implore the out-pouring of the Spirit's reviving influences on a ruined world. Since it is evident,

That the moral condition of man is such, that it cannot

be effectually ameliorated by any created power. The soul in its original state, was instinct with love to God: this was its vitality—the very soul of the soul. Sin destroyed this animating principle, and left the soul destitute of an order of life, which constituted its beauty and vigour. With the likeness of God, the liking for God departed. And in this view of the matter, the affecting and humiliating statement of Scripture, “dead in trespasses and sins,” appears manifestly true. Not more destitute of inclination for the duties and pleasures of natural life, is the entombed corpse; than is the unrenewed soul of any liking for those objects, which were the element and aliment of the soul in its original dignity. The lamentable fact is evident, that with the loss of the Divine image, was the loss of all inclination to recognise the existence, or to enjoy the presence of God. Nor was this loss restricted to the first parents of our race: their descendants have continued to inherit a soul bereft of that vitality, which was its primary brightness and excellenc. The seraph-like mind remains; but the love for seraph-service is gone. The harp still retains its form; though melody has deserted all its strings. The temple exists; but the Schekinah has departed. The immortality of the unrenewed soul, is a perpetual, undying consciousness of faculties “a little lower than an angel’s,”

with the condition and portion of the meanest reptile.

When the vital principle has left an object, the process of decay usually commences ; and in most cases, the deteriorating process goes on even to loathsomeness. Some exception may be taken to this remark, where, in appearance at least, the resuscitating principle puts forth its invigorating influence. No such exception can be taken, in reference to the soul : all its tendencies are to deterioration, to become worse and worse. It has no self-reviving elements : no help, no hope, can arise *ab intra*. The death within is the incipient process of eternal death. Souls innumerable are in this condition. Were this the state of only one soul, that might be sufficient to awaken the tender pity of the whole angelic race, and call forth their united, most vigorous, and continued efforts to effect its restoration. And could they achieve a work so vast, so glorious, it would add fresh joy to their bliss, and new lustre to their glory. To give life to only one soul,—to instil into it a principle of love to God, is an achievement too mighty for the whole hierarchy of heaven to accomplish.

That it is the prerogative of God, to impart life to the sinner. Whence, then, shall help arise ? From man it cannot : he has laid his suicidal hand on the nobler part of his being,—his immortal soul. From angels it

cannot; they see and pity a misery they are not competent to alleviate or remove. Whence, then, shall help arise? Though neither men, nor angels can answer the inquiry, yet the moral gloom, which hangs over man, is not altogether impervious and immoveable. Across the darkness, which enwraps our world—this sepulchre of souls,—a ray of hope gleams; while the grave-like silence, is broken by a voice from the living God, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in ME is thy help found.” God, here recognises the origin and extent of the misery, introduced into his world of souls, and lays open his own infinite resources for its removal. It is worthy of God. If before the formation of man, the blessed *Elohim* held consultation saying, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” and breathed into him the breath of life, “and he became a living soul;” it is only just like God, that the second donation of life, should be the result of the same hallowed counsel. Nor is man’s restoration less the work of the blessed Trinity, than was his first creation. The facts, which have transpired in the history of our world, under the special superintendence of God, throw the human mind back on purposes, as they previously existed in the Divine mind. The whole Gospel is but the revelation of a plan, which had engaged the thoughts, and filled the heart of God, from eternity. To carry out the great purposes of Divine

love,—to complete the design of mercy,—the Father, in the government of the world, administers the affairs of men, and subordinates the vicissitudes of time ;—for the same high and holy object, the eternal Son supplies, from his humiliation, sufferings, and death, motives, which may, under peculiar circumstances, powerfully affect the hearts of men ;—and the Holy Spirit undertakes the mighty work of coming into immediate contact with the soul, again to breathe upon it, and produce new life amidst the regions of death. The implantation of this new principle, is the beginning of a movement, making itself known in desires after God, love to him, and incipient assimilation to his character. All the attributes and offices of the Holy Spirit, are engaged in this undertaking. His love, wisdom, and power combined, are especially prominent. He enlightens, convinces, quickens, and instructs. His re-entrance to the soul, which has long been destitute of his presence, may not be attended with any outward demonstrations appealing to the senses, yet by evidences that are sufficiently satisfactory to individual experience, that God is there. The whole host of traffickers which had profaned the sacred territory of the heart, is expelled. As in the temple, officiating priests, ascending incense, songs of praise, and the cloud of brightness, told a present Deity ; so all the faculties of the renewed soul, tell that God is there.

The tomb vibrates with the voice of the living God bestowing life,—the soul struggles for liberty, breaks the bands of its grave-clothes, comes forth and looks around, and finds old things have passed away, and all things have become new. The Spirit looks on the chaos of an unrenewed soul, and says, “Let there be light,” and light fills the understanding, conviction rouses the conscience, humility bows the will, love warms the affections, and fixes the thoughts on God. All prove that Divine life has begun; and as the heaving lungs, the beating pulse, and warmth diffusing throughout the frame, indicate returning life to the body where animation had been suspended; so love to God, faith in him, and efforts after holy obedience, are equally proofs and consequences of life having returned to the soul. However feeble these evidences of spiritual life may be at first, yet under the fostering care of the Holy Spirit, they become stronger and more conspicuous. The renewed and quickened soul daily feels and acknowledges its dependence on the author of its new being for the sustenance, health, and vigour of the life imparted. Under the influence of this feeling, it seeks to satisfy its appetite, by availing itself of means appointed for its refreshment and growth. The newly-quickened soul, as a new-born babe, desires the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby. On this account, sanctuary service is highly appreciated, and

each visit paid to the house of God, is animated by the expectation that God will bless the provision of his house, and satisfy his poor with bread. Nor is the expectation disappointed, but on the contrary, is honoured with some fresh proof of the verity of the beatitude, "Blessed are they, that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The appetite for spiritual aliment, is an indication and a means of health. The infancy of spiritual being, is often attended with many symptoms of weakness, and proofs of dependence. The same Spirit that produced life, continues to impart his influences, for the preservation and growing invigoration of the new being. The elements, amidst which the new life, has been produced, are so uncongenial, yea, inimical to its existence, that its continuance can be secured, only by the constant superintendence of the Holy Spirit. The donation of grace, the gift of life, is "springing up into everlasting life." The renewed heart knows much, and the Holy Spirit knows more, of the deadly obstacles, this life has to encounter and oppose. Yet with his comprehensive knowledge of all the difficulties, he administers this consolation to the spiritual mind, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ." In these declarations, there is a guarantee to the believer, that

amidst the opposing remnants of the old nature from within, and the hostile influences from without, the new life shall continue to become more and more ascendent, until the whole soul, permeated with life and love, and perfected in the Divine likeness, shall hear the invitation, "Come up higher:" and the soul shall respond, shake off its mortal tenement, rise to God, and with infinite delight sing, "Now am I satisfied, awaking up in thy likeness." Then shall the happy spirit whom the Father loved, whom the Son redeemed, whom the Spirit quickened and sanctified, be presented before the throne of the Eternal with exceeding joy.

SECTION II.

THE MEANS THE SPIRIT EMPLOYS IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS GRACIOUS WORK.

“ Lo, all these worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.”

ELIHU TO JOB.

THAT *the Holy Spirit employs means variously adapted in originating and maturing spiritual life*;—that the Holy Spirit *can* have direct access to the human heart, and there produce new life, without any visible means, will not be denied by any who believe the Bible. With Him all things are possible. Christ used clay in the process of giving sight to the blind man; yet without a word he cured a woman who only touched his garment; so the Holy Spirit usually employs means in carrying out his gracious designs towards the souls of men, yet without any apparent intervening instrumentality, he has imparted spiritual life, as in the case of the praying thief on the cross. For “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;” this man prayed to Jesus, saying, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” From an

isolated fact, a general principle cannot be legitimately deduced. This fact may properly be regarded as a miracle of grace—a departure from the known and ordinary ways of his working. This one may have been recorded to show that he *can* work without means, and *only this one*, to teach that he ordinarily employs means. Among those means, that which the Holy Spirit most honours is, *His written word of truth*. It contains all the truths necessary to salvation, and which could not have been known, but by the revelation of the Spirit. These truths are the material, on which the thoughts of men are employed in the exercise of faith; these are the things to be believed. They are worthy of the entire confidence of man; yet a knowledge of these truths, does not produce faith as a necessary sequence: even where they are, to a great extent understood, and their importance acknowledged, faith does not necessarily follow. Unbelief, in every form, is a moral, and not an intellectual defect—produced by moral and not intellectual causes. It requires the influence of a moral agent for its correction. The admission of a truth into the understanding, is no guarantee for its influence on the heart. The agent that can secure for truth the full concurrence of the heart, is the Holy Spirit. His hand can reach the seat of the moral malady. The word is an instrument, and though it possesses a moral adaptation, to the end

for which it is designed, its power and execution rest in the hand of the Spirit. His, is the province so to affect the mind towards the truth, and so to place the truth before the mind, that light and life shall be welcomed by the soul, on whom these influences are exerted. The convex lens has no rays of light or heat in itself, yet under given circumstances it may be made to produce light most brilliant, and heat intense, even to burning; so the word of truth, in the hands of the Spirit, is brought into a relation to the human mind, which ensures the most salutary, yea, saving results. How long anterior to the result becoming known, the Spirit may have been working, by his word on the memory, conscience, and will, may not be easy to determine. Some process must have been going on, predisposing the soul to the change, before life was distinctly recognised, to account for the apparent inefficiency of the truth, in the former part of the individual's history. Whether the beginning of spiritual life, or its subsequent progress towards maturity, be the subject of consideration, the Spirit appears to be constantly answering the Saviour's prayer for his disciples, when he said, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The growth of the Christian in intelligence and spirituality, will be found, to be in exact ratio to his prayerful meditations of sacred truth. The word, furnishes the believer with thoughts, on which

the mind dwells, the Spirit imparts his enlightening influence, so that the mind comprehends and values the truth. The renewed word congenialises with the mind of the Spirit, and by the harmonious association of the truths with the believing mind, knowledge is increased, new principles are strengthened, and hallowed habits are formed. To a mind under this influence, the language of Jeremiah is fully understood, because the feeling recorded, is but the echo of his own experience: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me, the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." The word is palatable and nutritious to the soul, in whom spiritual life has begun. The apostle Peter, in exhorting the believers to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour," prefaced the exhortation by commending the study of the truth. The apostle Paul, addressing the Colossians, gives prominence to this injunction, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Habits of familiar acquaintance with truth, invigorate the principles of holiness more and more, until, the process being completed, the recording angel shall announce, "He that is holy, let him be holy still." And, in reference to this final issue, the Corinthians are exhorted, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of

the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

There is no evidence to be derived from Scripture, that the presence and the influences of the Spirit, are in the word; so that the word cannot be received without these Divine influences; and that the influences of the Spirit cannot be imparted without the word. This would be to identify the influences of the Holy Spirit, with the word. On the contrary, the whole of sacred writ exhibits the influences of the Spirit, as distinct from the word. Light is in the word, but the human mind is impervious to its rays, until operated on by the Spirit; so that wherever faith is produced in the mind, it is the effect of the direct operations of the Spirit, whatever order of instrumentality may have been employed in its production. On this subject, two extremes, equally erroneous, are to be avoided. One, to which reference has been made, "that the presence and influences of the Spirit, are *in* the word." The other, that allows no efficiency whatever to exist in the word, above that of a human production. This has been boldly avowed in a recent publication, in which it is stated, "Rome still maintains and multiplies her hostile positions; heathen and Mohammedan temples are as numerous and as crowded as before; ignorance and sin continue to scatter the too fertile seeds of sorrow through a groaning world; and it is no longer

doubtful, that the aspect of human affairs may remain as dark as ever, though the earth be traversed with countless millions of copies of the holy text." If no hostile feeling towards the circulation of the Scriptures existed in the mind of the writer of the above passage, it is deeply to be regretted, that he had not made himself acquainted with the recorded results of missionary exertions and observations, before he had undertaken thus boldly to write on the inefficiency of the holy text. From such records, indisputable and abundant evidence of the efficacy of Divine truth may be derived. Brahmins have renounced their vedahs and shasters, as altogether unworthy of their confidence ;—embraced the sacred Scriptures, convinced by their internal evidence, that they were of Divine origin, and consequently of supreme authority. Devotees to idolatry have, by the light of truth, discovered their error, felt the power of redeeming love, and forsaken their priests, their idols, and their temples ; and not a few are the instances, where heathen temples have been demolished, and sanctuaries have been raised for the worship of the true God : and these changes are to be traced to the workings of the word of God, amidst the dense darkness and unhallowed rites of heathenism. Intellectual and moral darkness must diminish, wherever the heavenly light is introduced. Errors long indulged are corrected ; the most sublime truths are here revealed ;

thoughts and feelings are elicited ; blessings are set forth in their intrinsic value, and moral adaptation ; duties are enjoined ; and motives are furnished, all unknown before. The very novelty of the sacred text has, in some instances, aroused the dormancy of a heathen's mind, to investigate the mysterious book ; and any intelligent Christian can calculate on the result of a fair and full investigation,—an intellectual conviction of its truth and consistency. And facts, have shown the accuracy of such a calculation. Many, have felt a conviction they could neither resist, nor conceal. An outward renunciation of idolatry, and a profession of Christianity, have followed ; and subsequently the Spirit has so completely removed every moral obstacle to a saving faith, that the living principle has become ascendent over the remains of depravity ; and the new-creating and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, is manifested and acknowledged. In the case here described the process was gradual. The intellectual man was introduced into a region of light and truth, before unknown ; the understanding was enlightened ; the judgment examined, and was convinced ; and at length the heart was captivated to the obedience of faith : “ for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” And though no mighty rushing wind were heard, nor flaming fire were seen ; yet there were sufficient proofs, that the Holy Spirit was the president and conductor

of the whole work, until it was developed in the vital vigorous faith,—the pledge of his continued operations, until they are consummated in the complete likeness of God impressed on the soul. So the subjects of these operations may appropriately adopt the language of the apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Or, if more distinctly to recognise the instrumentality employed, and the free volition of the Holy Spirit in the change effected, they may find their acknowledgments, embodied in the record of the apostle James, when he said, “Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.”

Soon after the author had written the above sentiments, he met with some remarks, by Dr. Payne, of Exeter, published many years ago. The remarkable coincidence between those remarks and the author’s, may give the weight of a second testimony to the opinions advanced. Dr. Payne says: “Allied to this error, and scarcely less injurious in its consequences, is that which Sandeman and his followers, appear to have fallen into. Few who attentively examine his writings, can doubt that, in avoiding Scylla, he has fallen into Charybdis; or, in other words, that in attempting to guard against the mistakes of those who seem at least to imagine, that the Spirit of God sanctifies the souls of

men, or enlightens their understandings, and purifies their affections, without the truth, he has identified the influence of the Spirit and the truth. ‘The Spirit of the truth,’ to use his language, ‘or the Comforter, spoken of by our Lord, is the *meaning* of the truth; and the influence of the Spirit, is the influence of the *meaning* upon the mind.’ Few errors short of Socinianism, or infidelity, are more dangerous than this. Where its influence is fully felt, it cannot but extinguish all religion, because it must lead to the total neglect of prayer for the influences of the Spirit of God. And it is an error exceedingly apt to be fallen into, by those who, though they admit of an influence over and above that of the truth, in the conversion of men, yet conceive of it as flowing into the mind, embodied, so to speak, in the truth; for no idea can be formed of any influence, but the influence of the truth upon the mind in this way. The truth can only operate according to its nature, as a moral means of illumination and sanctification. Its operation is in the way of moral suasion. It can operate in no other way: no other influence can be put into it: even its great Author cannot perform moral impossibilities. The truth *persuades* men to the love of God and holiness: it can do no more: by no possible means can it be made to do more. This, however, does not amount to the Scripture representation of Divine influence. *That* is an energy put forth

to secure the effect of this moral suasion upon the mind; and it is exerted upon *the mind*, not *the truth*; and puts the mind in a moral state capable of being *persuaded* by the truth. Thus Divine influence, and the influence of the truth, are entirely distinct from each other. They proceed from God, under different characters, or relations. The influence of the truth, is the influence which Jehovah puts forth upon all men to whom the truth comes, *as a moral governor*, ruling by motives, the only instruments of his government. The influence of the Spirit, proceeds from God, in the character of a *Sovereign*; and is of mere grace, securing, by an energy which he is under no obligation to the sinner to exert, the influence of those motives, which the truth presents to the mind, in order to his full preparation for the enjoyment of himself."

The ministry of the word, is another means the Holy Spirit employs in accomplishing his gracious design. In all the transactions of the Most High with the children of men, even in those, in which the amazing condescension of Deity is most conspicuous, there is an implied recognition of man's intelligence, reason, and conscience. The revelations of truth, and fact commend themselves to the human understanding; the holy precepts address the conscience, and the exhortations—all glowing as they are with Divine tenderness—appeal to the moral susceptibilities of man. The object

of the whole of revelation being to make known, and to urge on the attention of man, the great achievement of Infinite love, *the salvation of Christ, as completely adapted to the circumstances and necessities of perishing sinners*. Here is a system of means, of Divine origin, possessing a moral fitness to the end proposed. If aught be wanted here, it is an order of agency, which shall bring this system of moral means, into contact with the objects whom it designs to benefit. That desideratum is supplied in the institution of the Gospel ministry. This makes an aggressive attack on the fastnesses of depravity. It might have been expected, that the very contact of this order of means, with the strongholds of sin, would have melted down every form of hostility, and ensured for the ambassadors bearing such credentials, a cordial welcome, and assurances of prompt and cheerful allegiance to their King. And this result would most certainly follow, without the intervention of any other agent, if there were a disposition in the minds of the assailed, corresponding with the influence in the means themselves. A modern neology affirms, that the mind is affected by the presence and influence of truth, upon a principle similar to that by which the needle is affected by the magnetism of the loadstone. Here approach or contact *alone* is necessary to ensure given results ; it can scarcely be imagined that there can be any circumstances in rela-

tion to the needle, which can nullify the influence of the magnet. In this case, here is a cause acting on congenial qualities, and favourable to given results. In reference to the ministry of the word, how many are the instances in which the ministry of the word, does come into contact with the minds of men, and yet the desired results are wanting ! and this is to be found, even where intelligence, fervour, and piety of the highest order, are the distinguishing characteristics of the ministry. The defalcation of results, is not to be ascribed to any deficiency in any of the means, but to the entire absence of any moral property to respond to the action of the means. This, apostles discovered and deplored. The intervention of a mighty agent, is absolutely necessary, to abstract the obstructive principle, the dormant apathy, or the daring hate, from the heart, and prepare it for the reception of the truth. The natural and inherent enmity of the heart, in the manifold forms it has assumed, has ever been antagonist to the sanitary and salutary influences of the truth, however faithfully and affectionately proclaimed. To grapple with that giant enmity, reasoning, however acute, and eloquence, however enchanting, are in themselves as impotent as infancy. The Holy Spirit has engaged, to encounter and vanquish this antagonist, and to make the soul "willing in the day of his power." And without his gracious intervention, success to the

preaching of the Gospel cannot be secured. If the preaching of the Gospel, unaccompanied by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, could have been successful under any circumstance, it might have been expected, when administered by the apostles; their solemn commission—their peculiar endowments—their pure motives—their fervent love to Christ—their tender compassion for souls, and their faith, would have imparted an energy and pathos unequalled in modern times, while as ambassadors of Christ, they persuaded men, and besought them, “in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God.” All the sanctified sympathies of their nature, were enlisted in this service. They preached as men, who had a vivid remembrance of the moral wretchedness, from which they had been recently delivered, with a correct estimate of the soul’s value,—and intense pity for its danger,—in the full glow of joy at their emancipation,—and of gratitude and love to their Saviour. Yet with all these facilities, their dependence for success was on the agency of the Holy Spirit, with an entire renunciation of any, and of every other ground of confidence. Hence the apostle of the Gentiles, tells the Corinthians the cause of his success among them, “My preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom; but with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but

in the power of God." That the Holy Spirit's power might be fully seen, appears to be one reason why the heavenly treasure was put into earthen vessels, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." And if the apostles viewed themselves, as in battle array against the powers of darkness and sin, neither the temper of their sword, nor the dauntless prowess of their minds, was the ground of their confidence; "for the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but mighty *through God* to the pulling down of *strong-holds*, casting down *imaginations*, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ." The power of the Spirit, attending the ministry of the word, and making it an effective instrument in his own hands, appears to be fully exhibited in this declaration of the apostle. Here the prerogative of deity,—access to the imaginations, the strong-holds,—the thoughts, is acknowledged as being in full exercise, in connexion with the preaching of the Gospel, honouring it as an order of instrumentality of his own appointment. But in the ministry of the truth, the Spirit will not suffer his glory to be given to another. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, the men (to the number of three thousand) who heard him, were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what

shall we do? How solemn the scene! three thousand souls, as if possessing one spirit, and that broken and contrite; having one heart,—and that throbbing with sighs,—this the achievement of the Spirit's power, the triumph of his grace. Who can contemplate such a scene, knowing that the resources of the Spirit are undiminished, and that they are available by believing prayer, without giving utterance to the fervent desire, Come, O Holy Spirit, come, and put thy hand a second time to the work, repeat these displays of thy saving power, continue these communications of thy grace to a sinful world, until all the sons of men be made vessels of mercy,—every part of the earth joyous with thy presence, and gladdened with the beauty of holiness! The bestowment of these blessings, is the great desideratum for the conversion of the world. In former times, “the word preached did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” The destruction of unbelief, the production of faith, is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is very obvious that the more copiously the influences are poured out, the more efficient will be the preaching of the Gospel, both to the converted and the unconverted. That importunate prayer, associated with a waiting expectation of those influences, will be honoured with a large bestowment, cannot be doubted by any who believe the promises of holy writ. After the promise of the special influences

of the Spirit, the LORD says, "I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do this for them." Seeking and expecting the blessings, sustained by such authority, we can think lightly of the taunt, that charges such expectation with "the fanaticism of guilty indolence, and the delirium of sickly enthusiasm."

The events of providence are often used by the Holy Spirit in carrying out his gracious purposes.

The circumstances of individual history, often present a strange commixture of joy and sorrow—of light and shade. These vicissitudes, are perplexing to the reflecting mind. That they are all parts of a plan, arranged by infinite wisdom, and subservient to one great and benevolent design, is a tenet admitted into the creed, though at times reluctantly believed. A vigorous faith stands, gazes on the calm, the prosperous gale, or boisterous storm, and amidst the rapidity and suddenness of the transitions, says, "My Father is at the helm." He who hushes the storm, or grants the propitious breeze, neither slumbers, nor deserts the interests committed to his care. It was not a mere dogma of theology, but an axiom deduced from the word of God, and an enlightened and continued experience, that the Psalmist uttered when he said, "My times are in thine hand." He had witnessed the Spirit using afflictions for his spiritual improvement, and therefore recorded the result, "Before I was afflicted, I

went astray, but now will I cleave to thy testimonies.” And though some may be disposed to raise the question, “What connexion can there be between the physical sufferings, or mental anxieties, and spiritual interests of an individual?” it might be sufficient to reply, that man is a compound being, and that all the essential parts of his nature are united by the strongest sympathies. But a more satisfactory answer, will be found in the fact, that God has been pleased to make known to us, that this is a part of his plan, *to afflict in order to impart moral and spiritual improvement,—to chasten that he may profit.* “I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face, and in their affliction they will *earnestly* seek me.” Here the design of affliction is most clearly pointed out, to induce a return to God from whom the soul had wandered; and this perfectly accords with the Divine testimony, that “He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” As the assurance was given that the spirit of man, could be restrained in its roaming from God only by the Holy Spirit sanctifying the chastisement of the Father’s rod; the experience of many can confirm the wisdom and the efficiency of this arrangement, who have had to adopt the language of Job, “When he had tried me, I came forth as gold;” alluding here to the refiner who casts the metal already precious into the furnace, not to destroy it, but to

conduct a process which would ensure its coming out much more precious, having lost nothing in the furnace but its dross. So the Spirit, who designs to adorn the upper temple with the pure gold of his own refining, makes the calamities of earth, the means of separating, and destroying all the particles of moral defilement. And that whenever this result is accomplished, it is the effect of the Holy Spirit, is evident from the fact, that the severest afflictions are endured by some, and a result of a contrary character is produced. Some are afflicted, and they revolt yet more and more, while others under a similar process, become more the obedient and loving children of the Most High. This great difference in the results must have an adequate cause; and is not that cause to be found in the grace and power of that Spirit, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will?" And, what is the counsel of the Divine mind, we can only learn by the events which his providence and Spirit develope. The issue of many mysterious circumstances, and combination of circumstances, has, even in the present life, made known the wise and gracious design of God, which before appeared enveloped in clouds and darkness, while humility and gratitude unite in writing, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!" and hope looking up to God, has shed a cheering light on the present and the future,

while she sings, "In thy light shall we see light." And the genuine believer under the influence of the Holy Spirit, reviewing the past discipline of Divine providence, and its connexion with his spiritual progress in intelligence and sanctity, can say,

"'Tis but in part I know thy will,
I bless thee for the sight:
When will thy love the rest reveal
In glory's clearer light?"

However obscure the proceedings of God may be now, and however indistinct may be the connexion of those proceedings with the moral interests of the soul, yet the period will arrive, when the soul shall see how the Holy Spirit, by his wisdom and grace, has subordinated the most calamitous occurrences of time, to the highest interests of the soul in eternity.

In the *developement, growth, and maturity*, of Christian character, the Spirit's use of the events of Providence is generally admitted. The *first elements* of that character, are sometimes generated under circumstances, which might be pronounced unfavourable, or alien to their production; but which in the hands of the Holy Spirit are endowed with a mighty efficiency. His is the prerogative to soften the heart; and this he accomplishes in ways which illustrate his superlative wisdom, on account of the adaptation of the influence, to the end contemplated. On one, his gentle and attracting

love melts, subdues, and allures the soul ; as on the mind of “ Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened :” on another, the terrific breaking power of his judgments, as on the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, whose haughty spirit was taught by the most painful calamity, to “ know that the Most High ruled in the kingdom of men.” So it has been found, that even when a religious education, and a continued faithful ministry, have appeared to fail, the events of Providence have been the media, through which the convincing and renewing influences for the Spirit, have been exerted. “ By a gracious severity God is pleased to lay hold on many, and to give them reason to bless the hand, which, though by a rough motion, delivers them from the flames that were kindling around them, and shows the Lord to be merciful to them. Like Jonah in the ship, they are awakened by a storm, to call upon their God : like Manasseh, they are taken among the thorns, and laid in fetters, that they may be brought to know the Lord : like the jailer, they are shaken with an earthquake, and, trembling and astonished, they fall down, and inquire, What shall we do to be saved ? The terrifying fear of the approach of death, or the distressing weight of some calamity, which threatens every moment to swallow them up in destruction, rouses their consciences to an attention to those Divine truths, which they had long forgotten, and opens those

records of guilt which they had studiously sealed up." Conscience, thus awakened by the Spirit, presents a long catalogue of transgressions, with all their accompanying aggravations, to the eye of the soul, and makes it exclaim, with intense sorrow, "Thou hast set my secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Conviction is accompanied by repentance, and repentance is followed by entire conversion to God. And the soul, thus brought to God, often looks back with gratitude, admires and adores the wisdom and goodness of God, in subordinating the events of providence, to the purposes of grace, saying, "He has led me by the right, though a rough way, to bring my soul to God."

Other means there doubtless are, by which the Spirit's converting power is exerted on the heart of the sinner. But it must not be concealed, *that the Holy Spirit has direct and immediate access to the mind, apart from any visible instrumentality.* While he most frequently works by means, and it becomes us to seek his sanctifying influence through *them*, yet he can, and does sometimes, work without them. To what extent mind can act on mind, without the ordinary and visible means of communication, is a problem in mental philosophy which yet remains to be solved. That the Supreme mind should have access to the human mind, without the intervention of means, is a proposition to which we are committed, on the admission of the

Divine omnipotence and sovereignty. Illustrations of this proposition are to be found in the communications made to patriarchs, prophets, and seers, when some extraordinary deed was to be performed, or some important truth to be delivered. When Abraham received the intimation that he was to give up his son, the communication was directly from the mind of God to the patriarch. It came by no Urim and Thummim, or other oracle. If it be urged, that the important circumstances connected with this fact, justify a departure from the ordinary mode of Divine communication, we ask, What can surpass, or even equal in importance, the salvation of an immortal soul? The Spirit, in making a soul a vessel of mercy, produces purity and bliss, that shall shine and thrill in that soul through eternity; yet this is not the ultimatum of his design. He is here but beginning a series of influences, which baffles all the powers of arithmetic to calculate. That one soul will be an instrument, in the hands of the Spirit, of saving others, and they, each in his sphere, others; the full results of a single conversion, eternity alone can reveal. Light must emit its rays, leaven must work, and salt must diffuse its savour. The conversion of a soul is a work worthy of God; and this work, wherever it takes place, the Holy Spirit performs; and though most generally with means, yet sometimes without means. Upon this subject an

eminent writer observes, "I have known those of distinguished genius, polite manners, and great experience, in human affairs, who, after having outgrown all the impressions of a religious education; after having been hardened, rather than subdued, by the most singular mercies, even various, repeated, and astonishing deliverances, which have appeared to themselves no less than miraculous; after having lived for years without God in the world, notoriously corrupt themselves, and labouring to the utmost to corrupt others, have been stopped on a sudden in the full career of their sin, and have felt such rays of the Divine presence, and of redeeming love, darting in upon their minds, almost like lightning from heaven, as have at once roused, overpowered, and transformed them, so that they have come out of their secret chambers, with an irreconcilable enmity to those vices, to which, when they entered them, they were the tamest and most abandoned slaves; and have appeared from that very hour the votaries, the patrons, the champions of religion; and after a course of the most resolute attachment to it, in spite of all the reasonings, or the railleries, the importunities, or the reproaches, of its enemies, they have continued to this day some of its brightest ornaments: a change which I behold with equal wonder and delight; and which, if a nation should join in deriding it, I would adore as the finger of God." This passage furnishes, as far as can be

obtained, matter-of-fact evidence, and that by one, whose opportunities of observation, and whose capacity for forming a correct opinion must be acknowledged to be of a very high character. We deprecate the dogmatism of those, who make their own experience the perfect type and pattern, by which all others are to be tested, touching the vitality and genuineness of piety. The same causes, when acting on different material, will produce different effects. As in the physical world, the aliment of one body may be the poison of another ; so in the moral world, the Gospel may be “ a savour of life unto life to one, and a savour of death unto death to another.” The infinite and unerring wisdom of the Holy Spirit, comprehending, as it does, the minutest shades of human character, and the way each may be most suitably affected, graciously adapts the manner and measure of influence which shall most effectually ensure the renovation of the sinner, and the undivided glory of the work to “ Him, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.”

Christians ! a review of your past history will bring to your remembrance many combinations of circumstances, the arrangement of which was far beyond human control, which have been all subordinated to your spiritual interests. Evince your gratitude for the past, by a holy confidence in the infinite resources of the same Spirit ; by a constant vigilance against grieving

him ; by fervent prayer for the continued influences of Him who, amidst all your provocations and rebellion, has continued to bless you, by the bestowment of grace and repentance. Encourage your heart, amidst its tendencies to depression, with the thought, that if you are now the partakers of a new nature, your conflicts with remaining depravity, and wickednesses in high places, may be severe, but “ greater is He who is in you, than he that is in the world.”

Unconverted reader ! pause, and think. Look at the numerous means the Holy Spirit employs for a sinner’s salvation. Has not a kind Providence placed thee within the influence of many of these means ? And what has been the effect of these means on thine heart ? Art thou not impressed with the goodness and forbearance of thy God towards thee ? Just call to mind the ways, in which that goodness has been displayed. Thy early acquaintance with the Bible ; thy mother’s pious example, and tearful entreaties ; thy pastor’s solemn admonitions, and fervent prayers ; thy conscience, like another heart, throbbing in thy bosom, in the early scenes of thy guiltiness ; thy sudden bereavement of thy companions in sin ; thine escapes from the gulf of death, when disease or accident threatened to plunge thee in ; thy trembling and weeping when truth affected thee ; the dedication to the service of God of thy former associates ; and *thy*

capacity of feeling, at this moment ;—all show how much has been done for thine eternal good ; done, not by chance, or fortune, but by the very Being against whom thou hast sinned. And is it, that after all this expenditure of Divine care,

“ Though wooed and awed, blessed and chastised,
A flagrant rebel still ? ”

By the mercies of God, we beseech you to give up thine heart to that Spirit, who will cleanse and sanctify it, and make it his temple in time, and prepare it to adorn his upper temple in eternity !

SECTION III.

THE CONVICTION OF SIN THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

“ He shall convince^a the world of sin.”

JESUS CHRIST.

THE valedictory address which Christ delivered to his disciples, is filled with precious truths—cheering consolations, and appropriate promises. Among these, the promises relating to the coming and doings of the Holy Spirit, occupy the most prominent and largest place. His disciples were about to be bereaved of their best Instructor and most affectionate Friend, and to hear from his lips the promise of the Comforter, would mitigate the pang and alleviate the sorrow, which otherwise would have been insupportable. By this means, he diverted their minds from the immediate

^a There are two reasons for using the word *convince* instead of the word *reprove*. The latter word falls very far short of describing that work which the Spirit has to perform towards the world, while the former more fully conveys the idea of the Spirit's direct influence on the conscience. The second reason for the preference is, that the same word ἐλέγξει is in other passages translated *convince*.—John viii. 9, 46; 1 Cor. xiv. 24; Titus i. 9; James ii. 9.

cause of grief, and pervaded them with an authenticated and delightful anticipation. And that they might derive from this anticipation, all the consolation it was capable of imparting, the Saviour condescends to enter most definitely and minutely into the full detail and characteristics of the Spirit's operations. Grief may be aggravated, but not allayed by vague and indefinite allusions. The peculiar circumstances of the disciples seemed to require, that the consolation which should be efficient, should be peculiarly adapted to their present condition, and adequate to their apprehensions of future trials and conflicts. He, who ever loved them, and distinctly knew all their necessities, gave utterance to promises, as remarkably appropriate, as they were consolatory. Yet to them, these promises were not restricted,—they are as available and as applicable to the church and the world now, as they were when they first came fresh from the heart and lips of Christ. And though in the repetition of the promise, the convincing power of the Spirit is specially directed to the sin of *unbelief*, yet there is even in this speciality, an admirable suitableness to the condition of the church and the world. It is true, that in the days of Christ's earthly sojourn, the sin of unbelief, unveiled its monstrous nature, in resisting the most lucid and accumulated evidence of prophetic verity; since it rejected the Messiah, in despite of the knowledge of those predictions,

which foretold his coming, described his character, and set forth the offices he should sustain. Thus, amidst a meridian brightness of heavenly light, yea, in the presence of Him who is "THE LIGHT," did unbelief engender an impervious gloom, and a voluntary hostility to the truth. All the sin embodied in the conduct of men, Christ traced to the root,—*unbelief in the heart*. Men, may form uncertain and erroneous conjectures, but to the thoughts and sayings of Christ, as the results of his infinite wisdom and holiness, belong immutable veracity. And the language of Christ clearly implies, that the conviction of *unbelief*, is the apprehension of the master sin of the heart,—making a breach in the strongest fortress of the soul of the unconverted : convince of unbelief,—and every other sin quails and loosens its hold on the heart. What sin is there, that is not produced and patronised by unbelief? The veriest incipient form of sin in the heart of man, was a want of confidence in the Divine veracity. Wherever the same cause exists, similar results may be expected. A man may be differently attired according to the character he has to sustain, and the part he has to play on the stage of life ; but all the elements which constitute his identity, separately and in the aggregate, are the same : so is unbelief the same ; though it may sometimes appear, wearing the badge of piety, and observing sacred ceremonies, masked in the lengthened

visage and downcast look,—adorned with holy vestments and performing religious rites,—enveloped in a cowl and prostrated at the altar,—or encased in brazen effrontery and daring impudence, and not any changes of habiliments can alter its essential elements, or avert the curse it incurs. If unbelief resemble the beast of the forest in its reckless temerity, it resembles the bird of the desert in its folly, which imagines safety in a voluntary and acquired ignorance of danger. All the sin, which exists in the world of professors, or in the world of the profane, has its origin in unbelief. The infidelity in the professing church, is the cause of all the moral failures which have occurred, and of all the lukewarmness, covetousness, selfishness, and inconsistency which now exist. When the inquiry is proposed, What is the amount of vital godliness, associated with an active, vigorous faith? some peculiarly-favoured spots may be selected, where the evidences of genuine piety, of self-denying faith, are very bright and numerous; brotherly love, weeping for another's woe, or smiling in another's joy;—delight in devotional exercises, subordinating the ordinary affairs of life to the high purposes of religion;—hallowed intercourse, instructing, encouraging, edifying one another;—enterprising zeal, sustaining and promoting the cause of truth,—these are bright beams, which tell where the Scheckinah is enshrined, and constrain a wondering world to say,

“God is there.” In such scenes, faith is producing its legitimate results, while unbelief, like the vanquished wrestler, only breathes, and scarcely lives. In faithfulness but in grief, it must be admitted such scenes are like oases in the desert, few and far between. The reluctance to acknowledge this condition, is only an additional and painful evidence of its reality. Christ, who knew the subtle and dominant influence of unbelief, said, “When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?” And his immediate disciples felt the remains of unbelief so powerful, that they presented their petition to their Lord, “Increase our faith.” When the Holy Spirit came with his convincing power against this seminal sin, many were pricked in their hearts, and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?” In entering more particularly into the subject, that the conviction of sin is the special work of the Spirit, it may be necessary to notice,

First, *The mighty work the Spirit engages to perform—the conviction of sin.* Among the effects produced by the early preaching of the Gospel, there were not a few illustrations of the power of conscience when the light of truth shone upon it: some gladly received the word for a season; some were cut to the heart; others trembled and were almost persuaded to be Christians, and others with sullen malig-

nity, took counsel against the apostles. Truth in contact with the conscience, demonstrated the measure of influence truth itself could exert. Yet its effects, were short of that deep and permanent conviction, which terminates in the soul clinging to Christ. There often are many convictions about sin, when there is no enlightened conviction of the abhorrent nature and enormity of sin. There may be the conviction, that produces shame at the exposure of sin—that blushes the countenance with confusion, when the sinner finds that beyond all doubt his sin is known, where he had thought it had been hidden; the conviction arising from dishonour done to a parent's name, the wound inflicted on a parent's heart, and the stain fixed on family reputation; the conviction produced by pain at the immediate consequences of sin, and the terrific dread of the punishment denounced. There may be all these convictions about sin, convictions associated with remorse, and yet no conviction of sin. To produce this, moral suasion is not sufficient; for if it were, the might of argument, or the power of eloquence would accomplish it. But it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." And wherever it was witnessed by apostles, they invariably ascribe all the glory to the efficient influence of the Holy Spirit. He alone can couch the eye of the soul, take away the film that obscures the moral vision,

and make the soul see, and feel sin, in all its monstrous deformity. The conviction of sin, is an enlightened and feeling perception of sin, seeing it as God sees it,—seeing sin in the light of God’s countenance,—as souls see it in eternity, without its syren voice and seductive charms, unmasked and disrobed of all the decorations it assumed to allure and deceive,—see it as the monstrous slimy reptile, whose prolific brood has been hatched and nurtured in the recesses of your heart,—the offspring ever seeking nutriment and gratification,—while the parent sin emits its venom against every proof of God’s love, and darts its poisoned sting to aggravate each pang that Jesus endured. In carrying out the convictions of sin, the Holy Spirit shows the soul, the spirituality of the Divine law,—the reasonableness of its claims, and the equity of its sanctions. Not that he would overwhelm the sinner with terror and hopeless despair, but that he may dispel the strong delusions, which sin has thrown around the heart,—that he may exhibit sin, as the thing which the Lord hates. And that he may more effectually do this, he leads the sinner to the cross, to “look on him whom he has pierced.” Here sin is seen in its true character, throwing exceeding sorrow into the soul of Christ—mingling gall in his cup,—roughing the nails for his hands and his feet,—giving virus to the thorns for his crown,—guiding the spear to his heart,—heaping

the massive load of guilt on his spirit,—diverting from him the complacent smile of the Eternal,—and gathering darkness around his dying head. Here the exceeding sinfulness of sin is seen, when its atonement could not have been made at a less expenditure than that which it cost the Son of God. The sinner can no more think lightly of sin after he has once beheld its enormity, in the atonement it required, nor can he think that God is harsh and tyrannous, when he witnesses the love which provided a ransom so precious.

1. *The nature of the work of conviction.*

The conviction of sin, consists in the Spirit producing in the mind of the sinner, an enlightened view of the heinous nature of sin, with a powerful feeling and evidence of personal guilt. The hardness of heart, the obstinacy of the will, and the obtuseness of conscience, are the antagonistic powers, with which the Spirit has to contend, in this part of his operations. It is in accomplishing this work, that the truth of Scripture is illustrated where it says, “God maketh the heart soft.” Afflictions, instructions, warnings, and mercies may have failed to soften the heart. But when the Spirit comes with his convincing power, the heart that before was as insensate as the nether millstone, resembles the rock at Horeb smitten by the rod,—the hardened stone becomes a fountain of tears, God has touched it, and

“turned the stone to flesh.” By which we are to understand, the heart in its depraved state,—a cold feelingless thing,—becomes in the hand of the Spirit a new creature, all glowing with hallowed emotions. When this process is commenced, the soul looks back on the past with wonder, shame, and sorrow at the apathy it displayed under the hand of God, and convinced of sins against light and knowledge, against warnings, reproofs, and invitations—against repeated manifestations of Divine goodness and forbearance, against frequent and affecting exhibitions of a Saviour’s love,—it finds materials to give intensity to its sorrow, and pungency to repentance.

The obstinacy of the will, is vanquished by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit. The time of this work is *the day* of the Spirit’s power, in which the sinner is made willing. The understanding, enlightened from above, becomes the appropriate and certain medium of communication to the will. Harmony is restored among the faculties of the soul. A constant and amicable intercourse, is maintained between the will and the understanding. At one time the volitions of the mind were at variance with the dictates of the understanding. Truth was understood and acknowledged as truth, when it was not obeyed as such. So that the language of the ancient poet would express the dissonance which existed between the understanding

and the will: "I see and approve the good, but follow the evil." Jesus, when addressing the men, into whose minds, he had been pouring streams of heavenly truth, said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Passion, then reigned empress of the soul; to her sway the soul was submissive—yea, promptly obedient. Under the convincing influence of the Spirit, the whole moral state of the soul is reversed; the will is emancipated from the blind and cruel rule of passion, and brought into the liberty of the children of God—brought under the legitimate and paternal government of God, and the understanding becomes the minister of the Spirit, ever keeping the truth present to the will, as its only rule. One of the most convincing evidences of the conviction of sin, is the deep anxiety uniformly felt, to know what is the will of God, associated with a desire to do it, at any cost. One case, may serve to illustrate this statement. When Saul of Tarsus saw the heinous nature of sin, and felt the evidence of his personal guilt, he exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And though conviction is seldom produced by means bearing any resemblance to those employed in the case of Saul, yet the Agent is the same, and the result is the same, however diversified the means, he may condescend to use. The will convinced of sin, sees the tyranny sin has practised, the delusions it has created, and the

degradation it has produced, and cheerfully seeks the government of Him, whose authority had been despised and whose laws had been spurned.

In the conviction of sin, the conscience throbs and writhes under the hand of the Spirit. The drowsy apathy and indifference of conscience, acted as a strong repellant against the truth. Enclosed as in triple mail, it has withstood all means used for its moral improvement. Every shaft of truth that has been aimed at it has fallen pointless at its feet. In this state conscience continued, secure in its own confidence, and quiet, just because the very faculty of feeling was almost extinct, until the Spirit came with his convincing power, and with his own hand took away the armour wherein this strong man trusted, and gave to conscience a sensibility which, like a delicate set of nerves, thrilled with emotions awakened at every sense. Now conscience *sees* sin in the light of God's countenance, in contrast with the Divine purity, as an *evil and bitter* thing,—*feels* the weight of guilt insupportable,—*hears* the denunciations of the law against sin,—owns their just and righteous character,—pronounces its own condemnation,—trembles with fearful apprehensions of merited punishment,—and restlessly pants for that justification and peace, which faith in Christ alone can secure. Hence, the earnest inquiry and intense solicitude of the convinced sinner to obtain salvation. He has become acquainted

with his moral, his deadly malady, and seeks an omnipotent Physician—a remedy equal to his case. He discovers his true position, that he has rushed to the very brink of perdition, and that he is entirely impotent to effect his rescue. He feels that he is lost to present peace, and must be eternally lost to all joy and bliss, if Divine grace do not interpose. Convictions of this nature are the beginnings of a work, of which they are the prelude and the pledge of its final accomplishment. These convictions, undermine the strongholds of heart infidelity, and prepare the way for the exercise of that faith, which is unto salvation. These are the doings of that Spirit, who convinces of sin because men believe not on Christ. The words of Christ are words of truth, and these alone would have secured the conviction and confidence of men, had not depravity produced a torpor, a blindness, and an aversion which *the Spirit alone* can remove. All convictions, which have not the impression of his hand prove abortive. Evidence of guilt, powerfully addressed to conscience, may make a Belshazzar turn pale, or a Felix tremble, and these are its utmost achievements. When the Spirit operates on the heart of a sinner, and produces the conviction of sin, his work is followed by a series of interesting sequences, which entirely change the sinner's attitude in relation to sin; it produces all the evidences of genuine repentance,—“serious atten-

tion, pleading, indignation, flight, earnest desire, zeal, vengeance against sin."

2. *The different peculiarities of the process of conviction of sin.*

The *process* of this conviction, may vary according to the mental and moral temperament of the subjects, in whom it is wrought. In some it may be so *gradual and imperceptible*, that its commencement and its means, have entirely escaped observation. The reality of the conviction of sin, is clearly evinced by the necessary results, but the time and manner of its production, cannot be clearly ascertained. That a miraculous change has been wrought on the visual faculties of the soul, the convinced sinner feels, and others observe; though, if he be asked, *how* was this change accomplished, he answers, "I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." There are not a few genuine penitent believers, who distress themselves because they cannot, with the same accuracy as others can, point out the beginning, and subsequent stages of their religious history. That distress will be most effectually alleviated, by the heart cherishing an ardent gratitude to the Holy Spirit, who has wrought the change. Let the heart be absorbed in *the reality of the change*, and this will divert the thoughts from the minor question about circumstances. The religious experience of one individual, in its minute circumstances, can never be a

criterion, or pattern for others. The apostle, addressed a salutary caution to some at Corinth, who, "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, were *not wise*."

The *process* of this conviction in others, may be *so marked by time and circumstances*, as to make an indelible impression on the memory. The day of Pentecost, must have been a memorable day to the three thousand who were pierced with the arrows of conviction; a day, to which they would often refer through the whole of their subsequent history, as the day when they first experienced the omnipotent, enlightening, and convincing power of the Holy Spirit—a day when they realised a change too great for the eloquence or pathos of an apostle to achieve—*emphatically, the day of the Spirit's power*.

Nor can it be supposed that the Philippian jailer, would be at a loss to state the peculiar circumstances, which attended his conversion. The shock which aroused his conscience, the danger revealed, the dread which filled his mind, and the intense anxiety, with which he inquired for salvation, when the conviction of sin was first felt, would never be forgotten by him. Many others, *can* refer to events of an afflicting character, which mark the period, when the Holy Spirit first came with his convincing power to their heart; the process was so rapid, and at the same time so

effectual, that the language of the Saviour alone can describe it: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth," so is every one convinced of the Spirit. Where the affliction has been protracted, there the mind may more minutely recognise the first rays of light admitted to the understanding when the Spirit of God opened the eyes; the thrill of emotion, when his hand touched the conscience;—the horror at the view of the hateful nature of sin;—the combined aid of the understanding,—memory, and conscience,—under the direction of the Spirit, augmenting the attention of the soul, and facilitating the ultimate result;—the deep and bitter pang of grief and prostration of spirit under the conviction of sin. By indices so clear, the process of the conviction of sin may be pointed out in the experience of some; while, in reference to others, the evidences of the result may be equally satisfactory, though the process by which the result has been produced baffles all investigation.

3. *The wisdom and grace of the Spirit, are illustrated in the work of the conviction of sin.* It is a proof of the love of the Spirit, that he should undertake the work of assailing the strongholds of sin in the human heart. And the manner in which this work is effected, furnishes many evidences of the love and wisdom of the Spirit, in the adaptation of his operations to the

diversity of human character. Some there are who need an earthquake, or a whirlwind, or a fire, to arouse them ; and they can bear the shock. Others there are, whose sensibilities are more tender, and more acute ; and to them the still small voice is sufficient to convey the most solemn impressions, and to awaken the most powerful emotions. And in bringing the soul out of darkness to light, the Spirit lays no more upon the subjects of his influences, than they are able to bear. When the conscience is awakened, and urged to the faithful administration of remonstrances and reproaches,—the same Spirit that awoke conscience from its slumbers, directs to those ample and appropriate sources of consolation, which may assuage the sorrow of the soul. “He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind.” And lest the soul should be overwhelmed with too much sorrow, the storm and tempest are hushed, and succeeded by the holy calm—“the peace of God which passeth all understanding,” the prelude to “the joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory.” Yet this is not effected, until the soul is so completely shaken away from all “refuges of lies,” as to place its sole and entire confidence in “the Rock of ages,” the only “Refuge from the wrath to come.” While on the one hand, the probing process of the Spirit is sufficiently deep and continuous to prevent the hurt of sin from being “slightly healed ;” yet, on

the other hand, the infinite wisdom and boundless love of the Spirit are seen, in keeping back the full disclosures of inherent depravity and personal guilt, until an enlarged view of the efficacy of the atonement and sanctifying grace shall prevent the least approximation to despair. Hence the cause of growing humility, self-abasement, and repentance, in the subsequent stages of Christian experience. Not that the individual becomes more sinful, but becomes more and more acquainted with the hidden evils of the heart, as altogether depraved, and destitute of any moral resources to reinstate itself in the favour of God, and must therefore remain an entire debtor to sovereign grace.

Second. *The sphere of the Spirit's operations—the world.* How great the work ! how vast, and extensive the arena on which it is to be achieved ! This revolted and ever revolting province in God's empire, has vowed allegiance to another king, whom it honours with the title, "prince of this world." It is to be brought away from the usurper into willing and filial obedience to its rightful Lord. Sin has thrown over the world its massive chain, its infatuating spell : this chain is to be snapped asunder ; this spell is to be broken. The *intelligent thinking world* has been seduced and benumbed by unbelief ; it is to be restored, and rendered sensitive. The decree has gone forth, "As sin

abounded, grace shall much more abound." The accomplishment of this purpose, is entrusted to the Holy Spirit: and though, anterior to the coming of Christ, he had not been altogether unmindful of this work, yet, subsequently to the Saviour's ascension, he more conspicuously entered upon this undertaking. The special triumphs of the Spirit's power, on the day of Pentecost, may be viewed as specimens of his working, and a pledge of the complete fulfilment of the engagement into which he had entered. Since among the converts to the Christian faith, there were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Pamphylians, Egyptians, Libyans, Cyrenians, Cretans, Arabians, and dwellers in Judea, Pontus, and Asia, and strangers in Rome, Jews, and proselytes,—it might be expected there would be almost every modification of unbelief which could possibly exist. There would be found untutored heathenism, refined paganism, superstitious Judaism, and bigoted Samaritanism; and yet the Spirit gathered a handful from each, and all of these to make up a sheaf, as a wave-offering unto the Lord,—the promise of that harvest of the world, when, from all the nations under the sun, multitudes which no man can number, shall be gathered, as sheaves into the heavenly garner. Triumphs thus great, and on men whose characters were distinguished by such a diversity of

moral complexion, seemed to be necessary to strengthen the faith of the disciples, to disabuse their minds of certain errors, and to give them expansive views of the design of the Gospel, and of the power of the Spirit. By these they better understood the promises of Christ, and his last injunction, that they should go into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel. When they looked at their own resources and qualifications, and the innumerable forms of wickedness and idolatry they had to assail, they might have shrunk from the immense undertaking, and have resigned themselves to inactivity and unavailing grief, that they *could not* perform the will of their Lord. They were roused from all their tendencies to inaction and gloom, and embued with a hallowed temerity and enterprise, when they knew the mighty Agent that should go with them, and saw the specimens of his working,—the diversity of material on which he could act,—the complete change he could effect on each individual,—and the entire unity he could produce among the convinced thousands. As he made from this, the most moral heterogeneous mass which could possibly be imagined, a oneness of mind,^a a

* Πάντες δὲ οἱ πιστεύοντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ. And all who believed were of the same mind. Acts ii. 44. Kuinoel adopts this reading, and it is confirmed by the words which immediately follow. And that they should have *all things in common*, was no small proof of the unity of sentiment and heart, as many of those who now formed the

united spiritual family ; so he can, and so he will, from the discordant moral elements of a fallen world, produce the most perfect harmony of principle, sentiment, and feeling. In every part of the world, every modification of depravity and unbelief, however defying the attitude assumed, must yield to the Spirit's convincing power, whose sphere knows no limits, but those of the world, and the boundaries of time.

There is no form of depravity too daring for the Spirit to vanquish. Preachers of the Gospel believe it, and preach in faith ; parents believe it, and pray and exhort, in faith in this truth ; and that faith shall be honoured in the conversion of the souls dear to your heart, souls committed to your care. A remembrance of the Spirit's engagement is calculated to sustain the mind under the greatest moral discouragements ; and though disappointments may arise from other sources, yet never will the believing labourer in Christ's vineyard have his expectations of the Spirit's influences disappointed : the more expanded the fervent desires, and the believing anticipations of the influences of the Spirit, the more copious will be the supply ; as it ever has been in the past history of the church of Christ. The Spirit, knowing his own inexhaustible resources,

believing multitude, abhorred as unclean, that which others regarded as clean. But here conflicting opinions were all merged and lost in Christian love.

says to the whole intelligent world, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house ; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The influences of the Spirit are as clouds about the throne of the Eternal ; believing prayer can touch them, and cause them to break in showers of refreshing influence, on a desolate and wretched world.

SECTION IV.

ON THE INTERCESSION OF THE SPIRIT.

“The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”—PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

THERE is not, in the whole sacred volume, one promise more comprehensive, or more adapted to the condition of a sinful world, than that delivered by the prophet Zechariah : “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn and shall be in bitterness.” Here is the origin of all real devotion, the beginning of sincere and fervent prayer in the regenerated soul. Without this gracious interposition the sinner would remain prayerless, destitute of every holy desire. Hence this part of the Spirit’s work is

I. *The commencement of religion in the soul.* For when the Spirit enters the human heart, he finds it all hostile to the proposals of Divine mercy. It resembles

a cave to which rebels have fled. The royal proclamation of mercy has reached them ; the rebels spurn the offer and reject the terms of reconciliation, till at length some unknown individual approaches ; his benignant aspect engages their attention and secures his admission ; he enters, and each rebel seems to forget his hostility against his monarch in his fixed attention on this mysterious stranger. He proposes terms of reconciliation in a way till then unknown to his audience. The words he utters and the influence he exerts induce one rebel after another to lay down his weapons, renounce his hostility, till all suppliantly bow to the insignia of their monarch. This *Pleader* in the rebels' cave dictates petitions to be presented, gives a meaning to every sigh that is breathed, and every posture that is assumed, and the cave of rebellion becomes the temple of loyal devotion. So is the Spirit in the human heart ; when he enters, he finds all the passions and powers of the soul arrayed in opposition to the government of God, and the proclamation of reconciliation through Jesus Christ ; he fixes the attention of the soul, while he exhibits the doctrines of the cross accompanied by an influence, which melts down the haughtiest passions into penitential sorrow, and produces a cheerful willingness in the day of his power. Thus the intercession of the Spirit, turns the seat and centre of hostile passions into the secret place of the

Most High, where the Intercessor within pleads before the mercy-seat.

II. He then *awakens desires* too varied and too intense to be embodied in words ; but this gracious Spirit understands the sighs, and interprets the groans, which his own influence has awakened. In the earliest processes of the Spirit's interceding work, he makes known to the sinner the real necessities of his nature, "For we know not what to pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." His *teachings alone* can make our souls acquainted with their wants, burdens, and temptations. Sense of want is the spring of desire. In every age prayer has been deemed essentially necessary for any moral excellence,* but an assisting Spirit is the peculiar revelation of the Gospel. And it is the design of the Spirit to produce in the soul a deep sense of all its necessities, and thus to lay deep the beginning of his interceding work. For the conviction or revelation of the wants of the soul is but the incipient process ; the Spirit continues his work by inclining the heart to the objects essential to its happiness, and by exerting his influence until desires struggle

* "Bonus vir sine Deo nemo est. An potest aliquis supra fortunam nisi ab illo adjutus, resurgere ? Ille dat consilia magnifica et erecta." —*Senecæ Epist.* 41.

"Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo Divino afflatu unquam fuit." —*Cicero De Natura Deorum.*

for utterance, and the whole range of language affords no appropriate terms, in which those desires can be expressed. Then it is, that the soul begins its correspondence with heaven, continued and sustained by the Holy Spirit,—a fact which angels witness with satisfaction and delight, while the exclamation is heard, “Behold he prayeth.” This is a new demonstration of the wonderful love of God to sinners, a fresh illustration of the Divine purpose, “That where sin abounded grace should much more abound ;” a renewed evidence of God’s faithfulness to his church and to his Son, “who ascended up on high and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among us.” God the Spirit dwells in the soul, raises the thoughts and desires to heaven, and intercedes with continued importunity. Thus prayer is the language of God in the soul, addressing God in heaven. Such a scene is worthy of the fixed attention of the whole intelligent world. And every heart that has realised this inward advocacy must feel inexpressible gratitude to the Saviour, through whose grace and work this blessing has been secured ; for the Spirit of grace and supplication must be viewed as the fruit of Christ’s atonement. “Through *him* we both have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father.”

III. The intercession of the Spirit is carried on *by directing the mind to those ample and varied promises*, in

which every desire is anticipated, and provision is made for every necessity. The soul, having recently discovered its moral wretchedness and entire destitution of resources, might sink in hopeless gloom, and despair of obtaining help, were it not that the Spirit promptly shows the provision, which has been made for the present peace and the eternal life of that soul, in whom he dwells. The soul sees the enormity of sin, feels the burden of guilt, groans for deliverance, and gladly hears the Spirit say, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." The enlightened sinner lays hold on these words of the Spirit; he might have read them and known them before; but not till now could he understand their meaning, or appreciate their value: he sees in them the very help he wants; his faith receives them, and he hopes to obtain relief. Encouraged by these truths, he ventures to the mercy-seat; he repeats these promises; he relies on God's faithfulness, prays in trembling accents, "God be merciful to me; God be merciful to me according to thy word." More is meant than is expressed; but he that searches the hearts knows what are the desires of the mind, because, according to the will of God, he "maketh intercession for the saints."

And desires thus originated, and in harmony with the will of God, cannot fail to bring down the desired and needed blessings.

The process is similar, in reference to the disclosures made of inherent depravity. Until the Great Pleader entered the heart, it had no correct views of its moral condition. It was blind, alike to the curse and to the stain of sin. The Spirit opened the eyes of the soul, and having thus restored the moral vision, he set the mirror of truth before it, and kept it there, until the soul, discovering its own vileness, was humbled, abashed, and prostrated before God. It sighed, being burdened; it groaned for deliverance from the body of sin and death. But a heart so thoroughly depraved could scarcely hope for deliverance; the virus of sin had not only defiled the thoughts,—polluted the imagination,—corrupted the conscience,—enfeebled the will,—and beclouded the understanding, but had established *habits* inimical to the health of the soul. These habits had so incorporated themselves with the soul, as to become constituent parts of its very being. At a first view, when the enlightened sinner discovers, that these evidences of his depravity, this Ethiop's skin, these leopard spots are not merely *surface*, but are the true indices of inherent and deep-seated causes, he is inclined to pronounce his case remediless. And in a tone, which seems to bespeak a negative, he inquires,

Is it possible that a heart, whose depravity is so deep and so matured, can ever become holy? Can omnipotent grace wither the roots of sinful habits, and nullify the influence those habits have exerted? Is it really within the range of infinite love, to expend so much attention and power, as to turn these elements of daring hostility into amiable and holy graces? These thy inquiries, despairing sinner, are all answered in the affirmative. Oh amazing mercy, wonderful riches of grace and love! The same Spirit that unveiled thy misery, has made the most ample provision for thy relief, for thy happiness. His glance had measured the depth of thy heart, knew the nature and extent of thy disease, and had graciously volunteered to accomplish thy recovery, and said, "I will come and heal him." He dispels thy fears and removes thy doubts, when he directs thy mind to those promises in which his own engagement to heal and bless you is exhibited. That the entire deliverance thou desirest is *possible*, might be inferred from the exhortation, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And that it is *certain*, thou mayest gather from the promise the Spirit has given, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and all your

idols will I cleanse you. A *new heart* also will I give you, and a *new spirit* will I put within you ; and I will take away the *stony heart* out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep and do my judgments." On this promise the Spirit fixes thy faith, and encourages thee to believe that the moral wretchedness thou hast discovered is not irrecoverable ; but the desires the Spirit has produced may be cherished, with the assurance that they shall be satisfied. These desires are, under the guidance of the same Spirit, conducted to the mercy-seat, where, as inquirers, as suppliants, they wait and seek the promised blessing. And under the conduct of the Spirit, sighs and groans reach the high and holy place, and are tenderly regarded by the High and Lofty One. By him the sighs and groans of the contrite soul are heard, understood, and approved, as much as angel's song or seraph's praise. For he who has said, in reference to the above promise, "I will that this be sought for by the house of Israel, that I should do it for them." He has also said, "I am the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place ; also, with him of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." When promises like these are applied to thy heart, thou art invigorated with a

hallowed confidence in the verity of the Spirit, so that thou canst “come boldly to a throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help thee in time of need.” Then dost thou feel that the Spirit intercedes within thee, to originate and foster thy desires, and that Christ intercedes in heaven to honour and answer thy requests, with donations of grace from his own inexhaustible fulness.

The office of intercession is performed both by Christ and by the Spirit. The different manner in which they execute this office is thus pointed out by the judicious Charnock :—“Christ is an advocate with God for us ; and the Spirit is an advocate with God in us. Christ is our advocate, pleading for us in his own name ; the Spirit is an advocate, *assisting* us to plead for ourselves in Christ’s name : Christ pleads for us in the presence of God ; the Spirit directs us to such arguments as may be used for pleas for ourselves. The Spirit does not groan himself, but excites in us strong groans, by affecting us with our condition, and putting an edge upon our petitions, by strengthening in the inward man. The Spirit is an advocate to *indite* our petitions, and Christ is an advocate to present them unto his Father.” What mind can contemplate the vast and appropriate provision of infinite and unmerited mercy, in the work of the Spirit in us, and in the sympathy and work of Christ for us, without

exclaiming, with adoring gratitude, What more could he have done for us, that he has not done? Our guilt he has laid on Christ, and all our ignorance, infirmities, and depraved propensities and principles, the Spirit has engaged to correct and remove; yea, more, to plant light, wisdom, and grace in the heart, to commence a hallowed communion with the soul and God, and to strengthen and mature those habits, which shall result in a moral meetness for the service and enjoyment of heaven.

IV. The intercession of the Spirit, is further carried on by *his grace sustaining an untiring importunity*. Though prayer, as taught and originated by the Spirit, is the great relief to many of our sorrows, trials, and infirmities, yet to grow faint and weary in prayer, is itself an infirmity to which we are prone. Every creature has a tendency to form habits congenial to its own nature. It was congenial to the unrenewed man, to live without God, and his tendency was to form habits of forgetfulness of God, and absence from him. This tendency, though withered, is not quite eradicated. It springs up, and interrupts the progress of the new nature. This is felt, and deplored, as an infirmity, by the renewed sinner. To prevent this infirmity gaining an ascendancy over us, the continued work of the Spirit is necessary. Not only the remains of old nature produce and aggravate this infirmity; but the

suggestions of Satan also concur to increase its influence. For it happens to every praying soul, as it happened unto Joshua, Israel's high-priest, that when he has taken his stand before the Lord, Satan stands at his right hand to resist him : yet it is consolatory to know, that while the Intercessor in heaven interferes, and says, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord, that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee ; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ?"—the Intercessor, *in the heart*, at the same time, renews the faith and perseverance of the soul, to repeat its visits, and its errand to the mercy-seat, and to lay its hand on the strength of God, and say, "I will not let thee go, until thou bless me, according to thy word." It was the law of the Lord to his ancient people, that upon the altar of burnt-offering, "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar : it shall never go out." And this law, was most strictly observed by a succession of priests, who in their courses watched the fire, and supplied the necessary fuel. These waiting priests, were in their courses, also the intercessors of the people. The fire of devotion, on the altar of a praying heart, though first kindled by a live coal from heaven's altar, yet needs the constant vigilance and superintendence of Him who placed it there,—the care of the Spirit, the *minister* of the inner sanctuary of the soul. And there are times, when the embers of devotion

seem to slumber, and all but expire ; and that they do not go quite out, must be ascribed to the unremitting care of the Intercessor within, who stirs up, enlivens, and nourishes, the fire he has kindled. And thus he helps us, in reviving the grace of supplication, and sustains it in vigorous exercise. And with such help at hand, every praying heart can cordially observe the exhortation to Timothy, when the apostle said, " I remind thee that thou enkindle, or enliven,^a the gift of God, which is in thee." Happy, yea, thrice happy, is the heart, that daily feels this inward fire renewed, so that, far from being conscious of any coldness, foreboding the fire going out,—realises an increased intensity and ardour in devotion.

A heart in the enjoyment of this enkindling influence, gradually acquires a decision, and vigour, which maintain importunity. Many discouragements may arise, many temptations to leave off prayer may be presented ; yet, in the face of every difficulty, and every foe, this will be the determination, the fixed purpose of the heart : " One thing *have I desired*, and that *will* I seek after." This is not the resolve of a blind obstinacy, but the result of a calm conviction of the wisdom, grace, and power, of the Intercessor within,—a conviction that the desires, awakened by

his wisdom and grace, are *according to the will* of God ; because God the Holy Spirit, is their author. And this is a legitimate ground for persevering importunity—the work of the Spirit in the production of desires according to the will of God. This work of the inward Teacher inspires the hope, that an answer to prayer shall be granted.

“ ’Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, will answer prayer.”

Apostles felt, and taught, this truth. One exhorts the Ephesians, to “ pray always with all prayer in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance ;” and another consoles every praying soul, with the testimony of his own personal experience, “ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us ; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” There are other grounds, by which the Spirit sustains the importunity of prayer, such as the faithfulness of God, the work of Christ, the testimony of the experience of the church in every age ; but the object of this section has been to point out the *operations* of the Spirit *on the heart*, as the Intercessor within.

V. The *heart-searching omniscience of the Spirit*, in relation to his office, as *the Intercessor* within, is highly consolatory to the praying soul.

The human heart, is oftentimes the seat of distracting anxieties and oppressive sorrows, arising from discovered guilt and inward evil : it labours to find words, by which these sorrows may be embodied and expressed, and all its efforts fail ; the counsel and sympathy of friendship are sought and obtained ; but the heart is not relieved. An agony is felt, which baffles the power of language to describe. The spirit is wounded, and the Spirit of God alone can see and heal the wound. " For what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of the man, which is in him ? so also the things of God knoweth no one, except the Spirit of God." The thought, that the omniscience of the Spirit extends to the secret emotions of the heart, produces the cheering impression, that, though words are inadequate to express all the humiliation, self-abasement, contrition, and woe, which prostrate the soul before God, yet sighs and groans, comprehending the feelings which agitate the soul, are heard and understood by Him, who searches the hearts, and knows what are the desires of the mind. His unerring knowledge of the moral condition of the soul, in all the minutiae of its temperament, propensities, cares, and temptations,—will secure the production of appropriate desires,—recognise their existence,—interpret their meaning, and ensure their presentation to the throne of grace. Beloved fellow Christian, take the consolation, that

when you are longing after full conformity to God, and yet from various causes, you may be so perplexed, that you know not how to pray, or what to pray for,—that the eye of the Spirit sees all your thoughts, feelings, and desires, thoroughly knows all your wants, helps your infirmities, and makes intercession for you. This view of the subject, if correctly understood, instead of inducing a listless indifference, or a morbid apathy, will awaken a more fervent importunity to obtain more and more of the influence of the Holy Spirit. And with a promise like that, which Christ gave to his disciples, none can doubt the bestowment of this great gift in answer to prayer. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or, if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

VI. The intercession of the Spirit may be viewed *relatively, in the numerous prayers which are offered for us.* “Pray one for another,” is an injunction of the highest authority. Apostles knew the value of intercessory prayer, when they said, “Brethren, pray for us.” Their only hope of a cordial response to this request, was in the assurance that the spirit of prayer

was in those, whom they addressed. This seems to be fully implied, when the Christians, at Rome, were exhorted, by the apostle of the Gentiles, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in prayer to God for me." Also, in his letter to Philemon, he recognises the efficacy of intercessory prayer, "I trust, that, *through your prayers*, I shall be given unto you." He writes to the Colossians, saying, that "Epaphras continued striving fervently, for you, in prayers." Blessings descended upon these churches, and they were blessings, in answer to those prayers, which "the Spirit of grace, and supplications," had indited, and sustained. The bestowment of any remarkable blessing upon a church, is invariably preceded by fervent and importunate prayer, on its behalf, by others, as well as by those who are more immediately interested. The barrenness and dearth, may be felt, and deplored, by the multitude; but it is some Elijah, on Carmel, that stretches out the wand of prayer, towards heaven, until the clouds pour out their reviving blessings. Every praying man, who has much of the interceding Spirit, will prove an Elijah to the church of which he forms a part, and the neighbourhood in which he dwells. On the contrary, ministers may preach, pray, instruct, by evangelical precept, and holy example, without success: churches may droop,

and be ready to die away, because there is no one to stir himself up to lay hold on God. Union, in prayer, is a prelude of success. Hear Jesus's testimony on this subject : " I say unto you, that, if *two of you shall agree*, on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them, of my Father, which is in heaven." And this unity, the Spirit of prayer alone, can produce. Even Moses, alone, could not long plead with God ; Aaron and Hur united with him, in the hallowed exercise, and helped to hold up his hands. The holiest Christian on earth, receives much encouragement in prayer, from the fact, that his fellow Christians, influenced by the interceding Spirit, are frequently praying for him. And it is no uncommon expression, and pledge of friendship, based on Christian principles, to enter into a mutual agreement, to set apart a given hour in the day, when both parties, though separated by distance, meet at the mercy-seat, and plead for each other ; and thus hallow and heighten the enjoyments of friendship, by mutual intercession, with the Father of all mercies. And this agreement is made, in deference to Christ's authority, and in reliance on his promise.

VII. *The sincere and fervent prayers, that are offered, for the impenitent, and the unconverted, have a higher and holier origin, than human benevolence, or relative affection. They are the productions of the Spirit,*

awakening compassion for immortal souls, and anxious desires for their salvation. Old Testament history, furnishes some remarkable specimens of intercessory prayer ;—Job, pleading for his children ; Abraham, interceding on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah ; and Moses, for the idolatrous and rebellious tribes of Israel. Their intercessions were distinguished by a constancy, a fervour, and importunity, more than mere humanity could sustain. They were, doubtless, the echo of the Spirit's voice, in the hearts of these patriarchal intercessors.

In the New Testament, numerous illustrations are afforded. At the head of these, is our Lord Jesus Christ, who spent much time in fervent prayer. His own inherent, and infinite resources, were sufficient to meet every necessity, that came under his notice, as his miracles evidently prove. Yet it comported with his state of voluntary humiliation, that he should be found, as a suppliant, at that throne, whence he had been accustomed to distribute blessings. His prayers were mostly intercessory : the condition of man deeply affected his heart ; and he unburdened that heart in groans, and tears, and prayers, at the throne of his Father. Nor were those prayers unavailing ; the last prayer he breathed, in the precincts of Jerusalem, was, “ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.” And this prayer, was answered, when to three

thousand souls in Jerusalem, repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, were freely dispensed. He taught his disciples, to pray for them that persecuted them. We have a specimen, how they understood, and practised, this lesson, in the conduct of Stephen, who, when dying, prayed for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Saul, was of the number of those, who assisted at the death of the protomartyr. He was known to the churches of Judæa, as he who laboured to destroy that faith, which he subsequently preached. Thousands of prayers were, doubtlessly, offered, for this arch-persecutor. And he, eventually, in answer to those prayers, became a vessel of mercy. Could the pedigree of the converting grace of many, who are now eminent Christians, be made out, it would be found, in its earliest stages, in the operations of the Holy Spirit, awakening, and continuing, fervent desires, —importunate prayers, for their salvation, in the hearts of some ministers, friends, or acquaintances, agreeing to give God no rest, until conversion was realised. The prayers of pious parents, for their children, seem, for a season to be useless; but they have gone up, as a memorial before God; and, after their faith has been sufficiently exercised, and sometimes consummated in glory, those prayers are answered, in the conversion, and spiritual prosperity, of the objects of their earnest solicitude.

These are but a few thoughts, on a most copious subject, which must be replete with interest, to every prayerful mind. He, who prays much for others, must derive a solid benefit, from communing with the Most High,—enjoy the continued exercise of generous charity,—and participate largely in the prayerful influences of the Holy Spirit. Would we be thus happy? Would we have our hearts in a constant state of love and good-will? Would we have every tender sentiment, strong and active in our breasts? Let us be constant and diligent, in this kind of devotion; and pray continually, for others, as we do for ourselves. Thus, shall we best express our love, and gratitude, for the blessings we possess, to that Spirit, who, in many ways, “maketh intercession for us.”

SECTION V.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”—PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

THE witness of the Spirit, is a subject of varied and extensive meaning. At one time, it is introduced to our notice, as a comprehensive phrase, describing the substance and *animus* of the prophecies. “The Spirit of prophecy, is the witness of Jesus.” At another time, it appears before us, as the *resistless energy*, which attended the exertions of the apostles: “God also bearing witness, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will;” herein fulfilling the prediction Christ delivered to his disciples, when he promised, that the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall witness of me.” Another view, is presented, in *the testimony* the Spirit bore to the deity, and mediatorship of Christ, at his baptism, and transfiguration. But the view, proposed for consideration, in this section, is, *the witness of the Spirit, in*

relation to Christian experience. The *Spirit of adoption*,^a bearing testimony to our hearts, and minds, that we *are the children of God*. "That the world should deny any such testimony, in the hearts of believers, and that they should look on it with scorn, or treat it with derision, proves only, that they are unacquainted with it; not, that it is an illusion. It was a sensible, and true remark, of the French philosopher, Hemsterhuys, in regard to certain sensations, which he was discussing, 'Those, who are so unhappy, as never to have had such sensations, either through weakness of the natural organ, or because they have never cultivated them, will not comprehend me.' Paul has, on another occasion, expressed himself, relative to the point in question,

^a The portion of sacred writ which most elucidates this view of the witness of the Spirit, is the paragraph including 14, 15, 16 verses of the 8th chapter of Romans. And after calmly and closely examining the whole, there does not appear to me sufficient reason to make the marked distinction which some critics have made in the terms, *πνευμα Θεου, πνευμα υιοθεσιας, and αυτο πνευμα*. It would appear more to accord with the apostle's exegetical style of writing, and with the design of the whole passage, if the three phrases were regarded as relating to the same object, and varied only to explain, and give emphasis. This reading, I think, has not only the cardinal excellence of *accuracy*; but it also exhibits the beauty and strength of the apostle's sentiment. In the first instance, "the Spirit of God;" then he becomes, by reason of his gracious work, "the Spirit of adoption;" then "this selfsame Spirit" bears his testimony with our hearts.

confidence, having no foundation, but in impulses and emotions, of the most transient character; and on the other hand, it may occasion a depression, approaching to despondency, which the real state of the individual, does not warrant. The witness of the Spirit, in its relation to Christian experience, *is the work of the Spirit, confirming the verdict of conscience*, upon the great question, Am I a child of God? This we believe is the meaning of the language, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." And, in accordance with this view, the apostle John addresses his fellow-Christians, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence." "And hereby we know, that he abideth in us, by the Spirit, which he hath given us." This work of witnessing is found—

In the dispositions produced and exercised, as evidences of adoption. The tender reciprocation of affection between God, and the soul that is renewed, and adopted by the Holy Spirit, is an evidence of the endearing relation of children. God is love; and he well deserves the supreme love of the whole intelligent universe. The existence of this love, secured the moral harmony, and sustained the exalted bliss, of the world, in the days of man's innocency. Sin, has alienated the heart of man from God, and produced enmity, where love once reigned, and turned

the child to a rebel. The love of the Spirit permeates the soul of the rebel, eradicates the enmity of depravity, and changes the rebel to a child. The dispositions of a son being imparted, the soul clings to God; and, in the embraces of the Father, the tears of the restored prodigal flow most copiously,—tears of repentance, heightened by a sense of God's forgiving love. God's love, is now reciprocated by the renovated sinner. He who formerly laboured, to put away God far from all his thoughts, now enjoys the highest pleasure, in thinking of God, and in communing with him; his habitual feelings are expressed by the language of the Psalmist, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is the breathing of ardent love; but it is nothing less than the reaction of the love of God, on the heart. The love of God, in the heart, is shed abroad there, by the Holy Spirit. No effect can be more closely connected with its cause, than this is connected with the love of God. The nature of the work, clearly points out the gracious worker, who superintends, and matures the process begun. All the truths which have a tendency to magnify the character of God, and to augment the love of the soul, are now eagerly sought, and cherished. And thus, "he that believeth, hath the witness in himself." The inward consciousness of an ardent love, as an ascendant principle, where enmity

once ruled, presents a contrast so great, and demonstrates the working of an Agent, at once omnipotent and holy, that it is the witness of the Spirit to our spirit.

Confidence in God's paternal care, is another disposition which attests the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The entire surrender of the soul and all its concerns to the Divine guidance, is a characteristic of the child of God, an evidence of sonship. The human will absorbed in the Divine will, owning the sovereignty of God, and a cheerful acquiescence in his control, as a child to his father, so is the regenerated soul to God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The moral sense is made to perceive the touches of the Spirit's hand, and the indications of his will, and to yield to them : just as a son passing through some dreary, intricate desert, which he had never trodden before, confides in his parent's experience, and follows him through all the devious way, so is every one who is born from above led by the Spirit. This is not the natural tendency of degenerate nature, which, under almost every dispensation of providence, is like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke ; it is human nature made willing in the day of the Divine power. A

change, and a great one, has been wrought, to the accomplishment of which no agent, except the Holy Spirit, is adequate.

Assurance of God's attention to our prayers, is another disposition which indicates the presence and work of the Spirit in the soul. Some remains of the old nature may exist, and these may lead the believer to doubt his adoption into God's family. His doubts may extend their influence to his prayers. Yet when any appeal is made to his sympathy, he will strive to mitigate the sorrow he cannot remove, by prayer for the sufferer; or if strong temptations assail him, he approaches the mercy-seat with the assurance that his Father in heaven, will either remove the trouble, or give him grace to bear that which is appointed. The Spirit of supplication is given that he may teach the believer his wants, direct to appropriate promises, put the hand of faith on them, and sustain an untiring importunity with the expectation of the needed blessings. The beloved apostle, John, who seems to have written his first epistle expressly for the purpose of meeting the perplexed and anxious believer, and setting forth before him in different forms, adapted to a great variety of cases, the witness of the Spirit. This apostle says, "And this is the confidence that we have in him (God) that, if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we

ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Prayer is an exercise to which the unsanctified heart is peculiarly disinclined, and fortifies this disinclination by reasons like these: "I do not know how to pray, nor what to pray for; nor am I sure that prayer will be heard." Though the secret, but real reason, will be found in a strong aversion to God the object of prayer. It is not less true that prayer is one of the first proofs of the Spirit's renewing work in the soul,—the disinclination to this exercise, and the reason that originated, and the reasons that sustained it, are removed. Prayer becomes the aliment and enjoyment of the soul. This exercise is loved because it is the medium of intercourse with God, and the means of bringing down heavenly blessings. Here is the work of the Spirit, training the heart to "come boldly to a throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace in every time of need."

Love to the brethren, most clearly shows the work of the Spirit. Men by nature are haters of God, and *haters of one another*. And this hatred breaks out with extraordinary virulence towards the children of God; the more eminent their piety—the more conspicuous their graces, the more strongly will this hatred be shown towards them. Hence some, and only some, are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake; these are they who have the most resemblance to Christ.

Upon them, calumny, reproach, and contempt will be poured, and against them will be employed epithets the most opprobrious the malignity of the heart can invent. To unrenewed men the veriest shadow of holiness is odious, and its substance is intolerable. This hatred seldom unveils its frightful form. It is most frequently enveloped in the folds of a formal courtesy, or hidden in the covering of social refinement. Yet, that it had an existence, is acknowledged and deplored by the mind that has realised the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. And the great change effected is recognised by the strong attachment, deep interest, and tender sympathy towards the family of God. "Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." And by this evidence many have been able to quiet their doubts on the great question, when they have found it difficult to accept other evidences in their favour. The mind remembering how it once despised and shunned the true Christian, and being impressed with the great change which has been effected, can say from the heart, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee; and of them that keep thy precepts."

The testimony of the Spirit with our spirit will be found also *in the graces implanted in the heart*. Among those graces *faith* is most conspicuous and the

most influential. It renounces all the former dependences of the soul; and most cordially lays hold of the atonement of Christ; as the pursued offender, in the days of Israel's glory, laid hold of the horns of the altar, or as the shipwrecked mariner clings to the timber on which he trusts himself, that he may reach the shore. Unbelief had had the effect of putting out the sight of the soul, so that it saw none of the glory of Christ as set forth in his deity, or in his voluntary and vicarious sufferings; it had closed every avenue of the heart against him. As creation's beauty—of heaven's luminaries and earth's varied scenes—vale and mountain—ocean and stream—field and forest—desert and garden, with all their innumerable tints, are as one drear blank to the sightless man, and consequently awaken no emotions in his breast—so the whole revealed plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, with all its heights and depths, and all its combinations of moral beauty, is, as if it did not exist, and therefore kindles no admiration or joy, where unbelief exerts its sovereign sway. The power of unbelief is vanquished, and the miseries inflicted on the soul are removed; the moral vision is restored in the production of faith in the soul. A new world of beauty seems to spread itself before the believing mind. The power that made the material world, is not less than the power that made the thinking, reflecting mind to admire it, and adore,

and love the Creator. And the sovereign and omnipotent grace that devised the means of salvation, is not less than the omnipotent grace which restores the faculties of the soul, and brings it to a cordial acquiescence in the proposals of mercy, and to a full reliance on the provided atonement. The mighty revolution which has been wrought in the soul, where faith, saving faith exists, justifies the conclusion, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son, the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." The faith is itself an evidence of that vitality which the Spirit alone could produce, and a pledge of his continued sustenance until the quickened soul shall be presented in that world where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore. Until that crisis in the soul's history arrive, the witness of the Spirit invigorates the faith produced, and imparts its influence to other graces.

Hope, as a grace of the Holy Spirit, is a witness of the Spirit within the heart. That wild and vagrant passion of our nature, improperly called hope, too frequently produces a transient buoyancy and joyousness, which aggravate the gloom, and embitter the pang of

disappointment. This is a necessary consequence of a passion which is nothing more than a groundless wish of a selfish heart. This passion, though continually thwarted, still "*springs eternal in the human breast.*" And yet the word of God pronounces those who are without God, *without hope* in the world. It is a delusion man practises on himself, when he supposes he possesses hope, while yet altogether a stranger to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Hence the *hope* legitimately so called, is "the hope which makes not ashamed, the love of God being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." Hope thus wrought in the heart rests on the rock of eternal truth. The veritable character of the Holy Spirit induces the soul to regard the work of grace begun, as a pledge of its blissful and final consummation. Amidst the painful discoveries of remaining depravity he *anticipates* an entire deliverance from the power and being of sin,—and to be presented faultless before the throne of glory,—and though conscious of guilt, he hopes for pardon and justification through Christ; amidst the conflicts with external foes he hopes to be "more than a conqueror through Him who hath loved him." Hope thus leads the mind to desire and expect the objects, which the Spirit contemplated as the ultimate results of his own operations on the heart. The hope of heaven rests not on some fitful feeling—or

on some vague expectation ; but on an accredited document, written not by man but by the hand of the Spirit, on the fleshly tables of the heart. Does the anxious believer inquire into the influence of this hope ? He that hath this hope in him, purifies himself as Christ is pure. Does he search after its source and origin ? It is not an indigenous production of the human heart ;—it is not derived from any earth-born philosophy ;—it communes with unseen and heavenly realities ; upon it is the impression of God's hand ;—it is a part and a design of the Spirit's work on the soul. Thus, the apostle viewed it when he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath *begotten us again unto a lively hope*, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."—This is the hope whose sustaining power proclaims the presence and work of the Spirit in the heart.

The Spirit bears witness to the heart, *by the hallowed bias he imparts and the assimilating process he conducts*. The subjugation of the will of man, and the defacement of the Divine image on the soul, are the great triumphs which sin has accomplished. To rescue the will from the enthralldom of sin, and to retrace

the likeness of God on the soul, are the great objects of the Spirit's work. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty,"—freedom from the tyranny and ascendant power of sin. The will under the influence of the Spirit chooses the good, and refuses evil, with the same decision as it formerly chose the evil and refused the good. These volitions, are induced by motives so powerful, and perceptions of truth so clear, that the will acts with the utmost freedom. Though there are times when temptations from within and from without combine and ensnare the soul, yet at such times the holy bias of the will is acknowledged in language like that of the apostle's: "The evil I *would* not, that I do." The sincerity of this sentiment is shown by increased vigilance, and more fervent prayer, for the grace of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the heart; thus showing a oneness with the will of God: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." This fact presents a striking contrast to the former state of the heart, when it delighted in sin, being "led captive by Satan at his will,—the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Now, *led* by the Spirit, as the child whose will is absorbed in the will of his parent, clings to his father's hand, and is led through unknown paths. This acquiescence in the will of God, is the incipient process of the Divine likeness on the soul. Under the Spirit's hand the image of the earthly

subsides, and the image of the heavenly becomes more and more manifest. The Spirit is in this sense, the Comforter, because he brings his own infinite resources of grace and holiness into contact with the heart he renews,—and maintains a communion with that soul by which he assimilates it more and more to his own nature. And the heart in the enjoyment of these blessings says, with wondering gratitude, “Now am I a child of God, and it does not yet appear what I shall be; but I know, that when he shall appear, I shall be *like* him, for I shall see him as he is.” The measure of likeness already produced, is heaven begun on earth, the kingdom of God within; and the heaven of glory may have other attractions, but this is not the least, that it is the state where the soul shall realise complete assimilation to the Divine image. Other desires are awakened by the Spirit, but all seem to converge and centre in this—Make me more like thyself, O Lord! “I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” With volitions, desires, and promises like these, who can doubt whether they are, or are not, the works of the Spirit in the soul? “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened, O house of Jacob? are not these his doings?” In these are evidences of the Spirit’s operations commenced, and pledges of their continuance and perfection.

In reference to the dispositions, graces, and linea-

ments, of the Divine likeness in the soul ; each of these taken separately may be regarded as a witness of the Spirit, much more when all these are viewed in the aggregate amount of evidence they afford. One mind may more easily recognise one class of evidence in its individual experience, and another mind may, with greater facility, recognise another class of evidence, adapted to its experience. Here the same evidence, which comforts and solaces the genuine Christian, detects and convicts the hypocrite ; for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. The evidence is so clear and simple, that the humblest mind can perceive and comprehend it. Just as when you have been passing over an immense tract of country, where rude nature displayed its wild luxuriance in every form, from the parasite hyssop to the stately cedar ; the beast from his lair, and the reptile from his bed, are startled at your approach, and you begin to wonder whether the foot of man has ever trodden the same path, till at length you arrive at a spot where order, cultivation, and fertility appear, and these are the witness of man ; you cannot any longer doubt whether man has been there ; so you look back upon the territory of the heart, and your eye can see it, when it was one wild desert, productive only of the weeds of depravity, the lurking-place of every evil passion ; but you see it now changed into a scene of culture, and comparative moral beauty,

a garden of the Lord's own right-hand planting. This is the Lord's doing,—this the witness of the Spirit.

Upon this subject *much caution* is required. It is necessary to guard against self-deception. This danger may prove painful, if not ruinous. Physical causes have a powerful influence, on our joys and sorrows. We may at one time mistake a healthy buoyancy of the animal spirits for spiritual joy; and at another time the gloom and depression produced by biliary derangement may be mistaken for godly sorrow. Our safety against these dangers, is to make *principles*, and not frames and feelings, the regulators of our happiness. If we can, after the most impartial examination, arrive at evidence that the renewing work of the Spirit, has begun, then we may rely on the love and faithfulness of the Spirit to carry on his work.

Another danger against which we need to exercise the utmost caution, is that of comparing ourselves *with others*, instead of comparing ourselves with the only infallible and unalterable standard of moral excellence. One mind is prone to seek for itself some inferior specimen of piety, and then, on comparison, indulge in a high degree of self-complacency and inactivity; while another mind may select some specimen where there is a high degree of spiritual excitement, and pronounce such a state unattainable: both results are equally

injurious. Against them the apostle gives his caution, "Comparing themselves among themselves, they are not wise."

Some concern themselves more about the circumstances of conversion than about the reality. And it is one of the snares which often entangles and perplexes the mind of the young Christian. And simply because, the *means* and the *time* of his conversion, cannot be pointed out with the utmost precision, is he distressed with doubts, affecting his interest in the love of God, and the salvation of the Gospel. The witness of the Spirit, is not the discourse, the affliction, nor the event, which roused the attention; it is the still, small, and continued voice of the Spirit in the work he begins and unceasingly carries on in the soul, sustaining holy principles, producing spiritual desires, maturing graces, and perfecting the Divine likeness.

The testimony of the Spirit, is *a privilege* which cannot be too diligently sought, nor too highly appreciated. If it were said by Solomon, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity," how much more effective, then, must be the sustaining power, when the spirit of the man itself is upheld and solaced by the approving smile of the Spirit of God! How calm the peace, how elevating the joy of the heart, that has this testimony within it!—the peace which passeth understanding, and the joy which is unspeakable, are its portion! Burdens

the most oppressive are easily borne ; trials, afflictions, and conflicts are easily endured ; doubts are quelled, and fears are removed, where this privilege is enjoyed. It is the birth-right of the new-born soul. Where this is realised, the gladdened heart and happy countenance commend the piety which produces such delightful results. Men observe, and covet the happiness, though they hate the holiness of genuine religion. Joy in tribulation, is an anomalous thing in the esteem of worldly men, yet when they witness the reality exemplified in the conduct of the true Christian, they become at least curious, if not anxious, to know the secret cause of an effect, for the production of which their utmost resources are quite inadequate. A full participation in this privilege not only secures and enhances personal comfort, but promotes relative usefulness. It will be generally found, that in the same proportion as individuals enjoy religion, will their moral influence—their power to do good—increase. And though the truth of this sentiment is admitted, yet how many are there, who are gloomed with doubts, and distressed with fears,—neither happy themselves nor contributing to the happiness of others,—simply because they make no effort, to avail themselves of the privilege, provided in the testimony of the Spirit ! When the love of the Spirit, and his infinite resources, are contemplated, we are justified in stating, that the

happiest Christian might be more happy, were privileges appreciated and improved to their full extent. Christians, trim your lamps, fill them and kindle them afresh from above, and let your light shine. You live in times when vital, ardent piety is pre-eminently required,—when nothing but a healthy, vigorous piety, sustained by communion with the Spirit, can stand against the winds of doctrine and the hurricane of opinions coming upon us ; while the meagre, dwarfish thing that has had the name without the reality of piety, shall be swept away as the chaff of the threshing-floor. Beloved, look to your evidences,—examine, scrutinise the hope that is in you,—seek your privileges,—enjoy them to the full,—diffuse a heavenly influence,—point to the Spirit, and prepare for the conflict and the crown !

SECTION VI.

ON THE STRIVING OF THE SPIRIT.

“My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”

GEN. vi. 3.

AT the very early period in the history of man, to which the motto of this section refers, iniquity had very extensively prevailed on the earth; since at this time, the condition of man was one of such fearful alienation and depravity, that God was about to visit the earth with a deluge,—to make this once bright and happy world, a sepulchre of all the life and beauty which teemed on its surface, and thus indelibly to enstamp it with the brand of his curse. This humiliating fact must be regarded, as a convincing evidence of the entire fall of our first parents, and that their descendants inherited the same depraved nature. Yet, amidst such demonstrations of man's ingratitude and apostacy, the compassion and grace of God had shone conspicuously. There were not wanting predictions of mercy and specimens of the Spirit's operations on the hearts of men. The first great promise of a Redeemer

floated on the breezes of Eden, and cheered the desponding hearts of the first transgressors,—subsequent revelations, were afforded to invigorate faith and strengthen hope in that promise. And the specimens of the Spirit's operations, induce the belief that other communications were made from heaven, subsequent to the first promise. Abel was instructed and disciplined in the exercise of faith to offer an acceptable sacrifice, the first vivid type of a provided atonement; Seth was embued with grace to pray unto God; Enoch, as an intercessor for his race, walked with God, and had the highest testimony of the Divine approbation; and Noah, by his holy deportment and solemn exhortations and warnings, was a preacher of righteousness. These were among the first of our species, whom the Spirit renewed and rescued from the ravages of sin. These were raised to holiness and heaven,—as the first-fruits of those triumphs, the Spirit would subsequently achieve,—as the nucleus of that company of human souls, which no man can number. There must have been sufficient evidence that these, and other instances of moral excellence, were the results of the Spirit's striving power to render intelligible the warning, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Amazing condescension, that He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, should deign to bring himself into immediate contact with a depraved, sinful heart, and

that for purposes more benignant than the human mind can conceive ! It is a strife of love against enmity. It is a grappling with wickednesses in high places,—bringing down high thoughts and lofty imaginations,—subduing the obstinacy of the will and the obduracy of the heart. It is like the strife of a man with his friend, whose ruin he would prevent, and whose happiness he would secure ; or the strife of a father with his prodigal son, whose reformation, honour, and comfort he earnestly desires.

When it is considered, that the objects proposed to man for his acceptance, are purity, peace, and privilege here, and an infinity of joy hereafter, it might be expected that our very self-love would secure immediate and cordial acquiescence. But the inveteracy of our enmity to the things of God is manifest, in the ascendancy it gains over our self-love. To overcome this enmity is the object of *the striving of the Spirit*. And *He* alone who made the mind of man capable of perceiving motives, can accomplish the gracious design proposed, by presenting suitable motives, in a way by which he will affect the heart, and secure its entire concurrence. It might be expected that *the omnipotence* of the Spirit would cut short this work in righteousness, and at once produce the desired result ; but though the Spirit dispenses his grace as a sovereign, yet he deals with man as a rational and accountable being, and

addresses the understanding as well as influences the heart. The proposition to be illustrated and confirmed is,

That the Spirit does strive with man. There are various ways in which he carries on this striving. Among those, we may notice,

I. That the Spirit's *communication of truth*, is one mode of his striving with men. The sacred Scriptures are the words of the Spirit addressed to the minds and hearts of men. These are words of love and mercy, of reproof and warning. Man's aversion to these is sometimes displayed in apathy and indifference,—at other times in opposition and ridicule. Yet, despite of all man's aversion to these truths, if one be imported into the understanding, it shines as a light in a dark place, and reveals to the man principles and propensities, which had been concealed from his view. "The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple." The truth carries with it evidences of its Divine origin,—evidences which are felt, though reluctantly acknowledged. Men who examine these evidences, are deeply conscious of a solemn awe, when they read, or hear the sacred word. The truth which Christ uttered, when he said, "The words I speak are *spirit* and *life*," is understood, and felt to be applicable to all the words of the Spirit. Conscience sees and feels that the word of the Spirit

has a power, which no human composition, was ever found to possess. Inherent truth, is the acknowledged characteristic of the inspired word. The assertions of men,—their most powerful reasonings,—their most pathetic and eloquent appeals, are feeble and ineffective, compared with the word of the Spirit. Its very truthfulness, commending itself, as it does, to the conscience, makes a man feel that the hand of the Spirit, has touched him, having designs of love towards him, to rescue him from the hands of the destroyer,—to deliver him as the prey from the mighty. Every doctrine, every warning,—every invitation,—every consolation, may be regarded as the interposing voice of the Spirit, *striving* with man to avert from him the danger that threatens, and to secure him for the bliss he has forfeited. So that every man, who has access to the word of God, and yet lives and dies without the blessings of salvation, exposes himself to the heart-rending reproach, “Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.” Nor is the word at all times left to act alone. The Spirit himself imparts light to the understanding, perception to the conscience, and sensibility to the heart. Against these influences man strives, and thus

grieves, quenches, and resists the Holy Spirit. It is truly painful to observe in how many instances light is received, convictions are produced, and feeling is awakened, and yet opposition to the Spirit is vigorously maintained. This very fact furnishes material for repentance, and adds to its pungency,—the sins committed against light and knowledge. The word is stored in the memory, and its warnings often start before the sinner like so many interposing angels, to prevent the sinner from his sinful purpose; but the transgressor, presses his way through all that would impede his progress in sin, and thus maintains a determined and continued opposition to the strivings of the Spirit. It is owing to the unmerited grace, and long-suffering of the Spirit, that the sinner is not left to the obduracy he indulges, and the misery he has chosen. The sinner has long provoked the sentence, “*Let him alone,*” and it is only like the compassion of an all-gracious Spirit, that it has not been passed.

II. The *ministry of the Gospel*, is another means by which the Spirit strives with men. Here, in addition to the inherent power of his own word, the Spirit engages the sympathies of men, while *he* reserves to himself alone, the delight and the honour of renewing and saving the soul. For he has put this treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man. The Spirit, from first to

last, is engaged in making a faithful minister of the Gospel what he is. All the early history of the mind, and the several vicissitudes which have affected its moral and spiritual character; its conversion to God; the decision avowed; the first desire for the work and the subsequent encouragement that desire received; the endowment of qualifications for the work; the tokens of Divine approbation; and the designation to some sphere of labour, are all the work of the Spirit. The earliest convictions of sin, and the regeneration of the soul, are viewed, as parts of a process in the achievement of the result,—the full dedication of body, soul, and spirit to the work of winning souls to Christ. And not a few may adopt the language of the apostle, as applicable to their own experience: “For this cause I obtained mercy,” not to luxuriate in a spiritual monopoly, but, “that *chiefly* in me Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” In all the experience of the minister of Christ, two great lessons have been constantly before him,—the entire depravity of human nature, and the surprising power and grace of the Holy Spirit. And when the herald of the cross, goes forth on the errand of reconciliation, love to Christ, desire for his glory, and compassion to immortal souls, impart energy to his zeal, and delight to his anticipations of success. But when

the recollections of his own former hostility to the Gospel come over him,—and that his own heart furnished a specimen of the depravity of the whole human family, and that in his work he would have to meet this depravity as an antagonist under different forms,—he shrinks from the undertaking, inquiring, “Who is sufficient for these things?” And he would be disposed humbly to lay down his commission at the foot of the eternal throne, saying, “Who am I that I should go unto this obdurate people?” were he not reminded that the great I AM hath sent him unto them ; and that *His* presence, whose servant he is, will be with him even unto the end of the world. The thought, that he enters on this commission not alone, nor in dependence on his own resources, gives him encouragement to hope, that his efforts, however inadequate in themselves, shall be made mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, and for humbling every high thought that exalteth itself against God.

The minister of Christ is the medium through which the Spirit strives with sinners. Hence the strong terms employed to express the intense anxiety, and vigorous exertions of the faithful ambassadors of the cross. Their work is described as *beseeking* men to be reconciled—*entreating* them to flee from the wrath to come,—*persuading* them to accept purifying, justifying grace,—*weeping* over the moral wretchedness they wit-

ness, and *labouring* until Christ is formed in the heart the hope of glory. As the pious and judicious Howe, has justly observed, "There are ministers, whose hearts are in pangs and agonies for the souls of sinners, when the things of God are too apparently neglected, and not regarded by them; and when they see destruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them; and while they visibly take the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. They would, if possible, save them with fear, and pluck them as fire-brands out of the fire; the fire of their own lusts, and fervent enmity against God, and godliness, and save them from his flaming wrath. Is all this necessary? and what makes it necessary, but that there is a counter-striving, an enmity working in the hearts of men, against the Spirit's striving in the ministry, to be overcome?" It is the Spirit of God in his ministers, striving with men, which produces the strong feeling which justifies such language as this, "for whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you;" or as this, which the apostle used when striving for the salvation of Israel, "That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And as a man who is intent in accomplishing a great and important object, may try one method and fail, and another and another, until he

succeed, so will the devoted minister of Christ, *instruct*, *warn*, *exhort*, and *allure*, if by any means he may save some. And though he would rather draw than drive, and rather dwell upon the constraining power of a Saviour's love than on the terrors of the law and a coming judgment, yet will he use *all* means, in striving for the rescue of a soul from perdition. The correct portrait of a faithful minister, intent on the great object of winning souls, has been drawn by the hand of the poet, thus :—

“ For letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky.
He bore his great commission in his look,
But sweetly tempered awe ; and softened all he spoke.
He preached the joys of heaven and pains of hell,
And *warned* the sinner with becoming zeal ;
But on eternal mercy loved to dwell.
He taught the Gospel rather than the law ;
Reluctant moved to drive ; but loved to *draw*.
For fear but freezes minds ; but love, like heat,
Exhales the soul sublime to seek her native seat.
To threats, the stubborn sinner oft is hard,
Wrapped in his crimes, against the storm prepared ;
But when the milder beams of mercy play,
He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away.”

“ In this diversity of process the minister of Christ is engaged, warning every man and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. The Spirit that commissioned him to

preach, teaches him and helps him to pray for the salvation of souls. And the intercessions of a minister for sinners, are frequent and importunate. Could you, my dear reader, draw aside the veil, that often hides your minister from the observation of any human being,—could you see him prostrated before the throne of God,—could you hear his strong cries and groans, when wrestling for the salvation of souls ;—could you witness this scene again and again repeated, and know that these repeated errands within the veil, were for the purpose of interceding for your present peace and your eternal salvation, you would then be most deeply impressed with the fact, that such strivings, so often repeated, could only be suggested and maintained by the Spirit of God. And coming from such a scene, would you not be constrained to say, that if against such strivings, you persevered in your hostility, you would deserve a misery, which no language can describe ?—a misery in no small degree aggravated by the eternal remembrance of a scene where all the compassion of God, and all the tenderness of a sanctified human heart clasped hands in striving for your salvation. Though you have not been admitted to witness the scene described, be assured it is the true picture of some of the most solemn and sorrowful hours of a minister's retirement. When this fact is taken into consideration, that it is from such an engagement, a

minister comes to his more public work, it is no wonder that in many instances an unction and a pathos should be felt attending his message, making the conscience tremble, the heart throb, and the eye weep : the wonder is that the instances are so few. Yet God does not leave his faithful servant without witness. A Felix trembles,—an Agrippa is almost persuaded,—a Lydia's heart is opened,—a Philippian exclaims, "What must I do to be saved?"—an Apollos seeks the company of Aquila and Priscilla to be instructed ; these, like the blossoms of spring, are promises all which awaken hope ; but, alas ! some, like those blossoms, are nipped by the frost, or consumed by the mildew, while others become good fruit, and fruit which remains until ripeness, to adorn the garden, and reward the labourer, and honour the proprietor.

III. *The convictions of sin*, are the strivings of the Spirit. By his word, by his ministers, and by the events of providence, the Spirit maintains a unity of design, in producing the convictions of sin. In reference to all these means, by which the Spirit strives with men,—the word, with its doctrines, precepts, exhortations, and warnings,—the ministry, with all its diversity of gifts, and different measures of grace,—providence, with all its light and shade, its joys and sorrows,—in reference to all these, may the words of Elihu be applied, "Lo, all these worketh God often-

times with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Genuine conviction of sin, is the print of the Spirit's finger, on the soul. The instrument cannot take to itself the glory due to the Agent. Arrows are but arrows, whether in the hands of an infant, or in the hands of a man; the skilful, and strong-armed archer, alone can make them effective; and the arrows of truth, are directed, by the unerring Spirit, to the hearts of the King's enemies, producing there the deepest convictions. Nor does the Spirit confine himself to those processes, which are of an alarming character. He strives by the gentle and alluring influence of his grace, and by manifestations of his love and forbearance, which deeply affect the sinner, with most humiliating convictions of his depravity, and vileness, in having resisted an agent so lovely, whose influences had all been put forth, for the most benign and holy purposes. In perfect accordance with the above sentiments, are those of the pious Howe, who says, in his own emphatic style, "The Spirit also strives immediately with the souls of sinners, and pleads with them, sometimes as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear, and dread; sometimes as a Spirit of grace, wooing, and beseeching: and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of men's grieving, vexing, quenching, resisting, the Spirit:

which resistance implies continual striving. No striving, but doth suppose an obstruction, and difficulty to be striven withal: there could be no resisting, if there were not counter-striving; and hereby despite is done to the Spirit of grace. O fearful aggravation! that such a Spirit is striven against! It is the Spirit of grace, love, and goodness, the Spirit of all kindness, sweetness, and benignity, which a wicked man doth despite unto. How vile and horrid a thing to requite grace, love, and sweetness with spite! As if the sinner should say, Thou wouldest turn me to God, but I will not be turned. The blessed God says, 'Turn at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit unto you.' There are preventive insinuations, upon which if we essay to turn, plentiful effusions of the Spirit may be hoped to ensue; for he is the Spirit of grace. When we draw back, and resist, or slight, those foregoing good motions of that Holy Spirit; this is despising him. And doth not this import enmity, in a high degree? That the Spirit need strive so much, that it may be overcome, as with some, at his own pleasure, he doth; with others, in just displeasure, he strives no more, and so it is nearer overcome." How much, and how frequently, the Spirit strives with us, we may not, in the present state, be able fully to discover; but this full discovery in the light of eternity, will furnish renewed cause for our gratitude

and praise, or supply increased material for our wretchedness, and self-reproach. Men rush on to eternal death, not unwarned of their danger, nor unentreated to return, but in determined opposition to those warnings and entreaties of the Spirit, who strives, saying, Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? Men stumble on the dark mountains of sin, and fall into perdition, not because no light has been afforded, but because they have closed their eyes, and hardened their hearts, lest they should see, and feel, and be converted, and be healed. The inveterate antagonism of fallen human nature, is not in any degree diminished, since our Lord was upon earth, when he recorded, as the result of his knowledge of man, this verdict: "This is *the condemnation*, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." If this were the moral condition of man, the deadly hate to "the Light of the world," when its rays, purely and brightly, fell only on the threshold of the soul, that hate, and the opposition it produces, will be more determined against that light, which the Holy Spirit sends into the recesses of the soul, to every avenue of the heart, setting the sins of the transgressor in the light of God's countenance. And the convictions the

Spirit thus produces, as a part of his striving process, are usually accompanied with some impressive evidence, that they are his own work. The new exhibitions of truth have not wrought them,—the power of argument and the charm of eloquence have not,—the admonition of friendship, and parental solicitude, have not,—the events of providence, in all their variety, have not,—the opening grave, and all the solemnity of funeral obsequies, have not wrought them; these may have been the media of operation, but the great worker was the Holy Spirit, striving with the conscience and the heart. And the genuine convictions of sin, bear the signature of his hand. And, as these convictions are the preliminaries to a subsequent and contemplated result, it may be desirable to notice—

IV. The striving of the Spirit is also illustrated in the regeneration of the soul. When the Spirit looks upon a heart, which he is about to renew in his own likeness, and form after his own image, he beholds an entire destitution of every element congenial to his gracious design, and the existence of every principle, that is inimical to his holy nature, and threatens to thwart his gracious purpose. The Spirit finds the heart pre-occupied with a host of idol guests, all which strive to maintain their position. The understanding is beclouded by ignorance long cherished, and errors long indulged. The conscience is enthralled,

and benumbed. The judgment is corrupted, and warped from the truth. The will is altogether biased by prejudice, and armed with hostility. The heart is Satan's palace ; and the strong man, that has long kept his goods in peace, will not relinquish his authority, nor abdicate his throne, without the most determined resistance. Amidst all this array of hostile powers, the Spirit enters, asserts his right, exerts a holy, subduing influence, and writes his own laws, retracing them on the fleshly tables of the heart. Light and grace are imparted, where darkness and depravity combined to reign ; cheerful submission and love are produced, where obstinacy and enmity ruled with iron sway ; peace and purity now dwell, where the restless confusion of passion, and the defiling power of sin, spread their baneful influence. Here is, indeed, a great change. The subjects of it are addressed in such terms as these, "Once were ye darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ;" "Ye were by nature the children of wrath, even as others ;" but that Spirit who is rich in mercy, by his great love wherewith he loved you, has made you "his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that ye should walk in them." Who is there, that has experienced this change, that does not look back with admiring gratitude to the longsuffering and patience of the Spirit, through all

the history of his operations? And are not your shame, and your self-abasement, as intense as your gratitude, when you think how daring and continued was your striving against the Spirit? O amazing condescension and love, that the Spirit did not comply with the wish of your heart, when that wish was, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways!" Had not the Spirit loved you, with a love surpassing all knowledge, you had now been inheriting all the woe included in the desertion of God. Why he did not leave you, and give you over to a relentless impenitence, can be accounted for only on the reason his word furnishes, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Heavens may well be astonished, and earth may wonder, that the Holy One of Israel, the Spirit, the source of all the holiness in the universe, should fix his love on a human heart, and say, "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it;" and though again and again repulsed, yet his purpose to enter, and bless that heart, with his presence and his grace, is pursued, until the former abode of every evil thought, becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. His rightful domain he gains by conquest, and that conquest is secured by constant striving,

V. The striving of the Spirit is further illustrated in the gradual developement and advancing maturity of the Christian character. The calm of apathy and the quietude of indifference which formerly existed are now closed. The soul regenerated by the Holy Spirit, proclaims a war against the thinking and the mental habits formerly indulged. Now begins the strife between the flesh and the Spirit. Former habits, like the harpies of the soul, seek their accustomed gratification ; but higher and holier principles being produced, that gratification is denied. And though these evil habits are not to be silenced, by the first refusal, yet the regenerated soul, moved by the gracious Spirit, renews the repulse, and keeps these habits in abeyance, until by a continued maintenance of holy principles, the whole soul becomes pre-occupied with a train of hallowed and sanctifying engagements, and these habits sink in all the feebleness of disarmed and vanquished enemies. Not that this is accomplished without much striving of the Spirit ; for at every step of his experience, the believer most painfully feels the truth, that “the Spirit *earnestly craveth against* the flesh, and the flesh *earnestly craveth against* the Spirit, and these are adverse the one to the other.”^a And this produces a striving, the intensity of which none

^a Schleusneri Lex. *Επιθυμew*, 5.

can imagine, but those who have felt it, and even they find a difficulty in attempting an accurate description. It bears a near resemblance to that conflict the apostle experienced, when he said, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man ; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" Nor could this conflict be endured, did not the inward power of the Spirit, sustain and invigorate the mind to maintain the struggle. The Spirit, who has striven until he has made the will to acquiesce in his purpose of grace, continues to strive until every remnant of sin shall be extirpated from the heart. The understanding and the will concurring with the Spirit, while the passions and the inclinations are at variance with his hallowed design, there is necessarily a determined strife continued. For the contrary elements, fire and water, are not more opposed the one to the other, than are the influences of the Spirit, and the remains of depraved passions. We venture to think that it is no objection against this strife, or conflict being carried on, because some of those who were distinguished by the ancient historian, or the ancient poet, expressed sentiments indicative of a similar moral contest.

On the contrary, since it was not the object of the historian or of the poet, to recognise or record the sacred emotions of the heart, the very incidental manner in which such sentiments are introduced, rather favour the idea that a Divine and hallowed influence was exercised on their minds. For it is scarcely sufficient to account for the language employed, to suppose, that it is descriptive of only an unenlightened and unrenewed conscience, striving against craving and depraved inclinations. Among several illustrations of this class, two may be noticed. Xenophon^a represents Araspes, the Median nobleman, when, on account of his being overcome by the beautiful Panthea, he laments before Cyrus, saying, "I now know myself, I certainly have two souls; for evidently it is not one and the same, which is both evil and good, nor which loves honourable and base conduct, and at the same time wishes to do a thing, and not to do it. Certainly, then, there are two souls, and when the good one prevails, then it does good; and when the evil one predominates, then it does evil. But now the good takes thee as an ally, it chiefly prevails." Another illustration is given by an ancient poet, when he puts this sentiment as uttered in the speech of Medea, "I know indeed, such things I am about to perform are evil; but my mind is better

^a Xenophon, *Cyrop.* lib. vi. cap. i. sec. 41.

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than my desires.”^a Who can positively affirm, that the Divine influence had no share in the moral conflict, which the parties evidently felt? The terms in which that conflict is described, are those which correspond with the language of the renewed mind, describing a state of experience quite unknown, till the work of the Spirit began. For it is not the mere hesitancy of an occasional indecision, but the continued and vigorous opposition of principle with principle, the new and the holy, with the old and depraved. And it is the solace of the believer, that he is not unaided in this conflict; the Spirit strives with him and for him. It is this fact, which imparts energy and prowess to the mind of the genuine Christian. If in the exercises of prayer, he is interrupted as the patriarch was, when offering sacrifice, by intruding sinful passions, which like the birds distract the attention and steal the offering, an unseen, but mighty agent gives strength and firmness to fray away the intruders, and continue the hallowed exercise. He helps us in the time of our infirmity, and if there be a time when the Christian learns his own weakness, and feels his need of the Spirit’s aid more than another, it is when he finds the hidden evils of his heart presenting themselves in formidable array, disturbing and polluting the holiest exercises of the soul. This is the

^a Eurip. *Medea*, 1086.

experience, not of a day nor of a year 'only ; but, to a greater or less degree, of the whole of his earthly career. He bears the name, wears the armour, practises the discipline, and exercises the vigilance of a soldier. His foes are many, but the greatest are those of his own house,—the evils within. His life is a legible commentary on the truth, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. At every step, the believer, like Bunyan's pilgrim, must keep sword in hand and shield prepared, that he may smite with the one, and resist with the other.

Nor is the flesh—the inherent depravity, the only adversary. Without it, others would be comparatively innoxious. The fortress would be proof against the hosts without, were it not for the traitors within. Troy had remained, had not the treacherous foe within opened the gates. The alliance of innate depravity with our external adversaries, is that which makes the conflict formidable, and the succour of the Spirit absolutely necessary. When this alliance is contemplated, the Christian is sometimes inclined to shrink from the contest, overwhelmed by the apprehension of defeat ; and in times when faith is weak, he exclaims, "I shall one day fall by these my adversaries." Under such apprehensions, his energies would fail, were he not encouraged by the assurance, that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The

Spirit of God within, having gained the ascendancy in the heart, furnishes a prelude and a pledge of a still greater conquest. Conscious of what the Spirit has already achieved, the believer goes to the contest against the world, the flesh, and the devil, feeling the truth of the motto he had long since inscribed on his helmet, "I will go in the strength of the Lord." That strength is the Spirit of God within him, giving courage to his heart, vigour and skill to his arm, and decision to his aim. Hitherto it has not failed him; the more he has expected from it, the more he has realised; the more simple and entire his reliance on it, the greater have been the triumphs he has achieved. Up to the present period of his history, he can say from his heart, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped me." He looks back upon the past, and he sees many a memento of the gracious interposition of the Spirit striving within him: victories obtained are alike causes of gratitude for the past, and of confidence for the future. For though the scene in prospect is still a continued battle-field, wide spreading even to the very verge of life's horizon, yet the grace, strength, and faithfulness of the Spirit are unfailing. These have been proved, and found equal to every past emergency of the Christian's experience, and will be found so in all his future necessities. Scarcely any situation, or combination of circumstances in which a believer can be

placed, has the peculiar difficulty of being unprecedented. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though, some strange thing happened unto you.” He who has been the help of his people, will never leave nor forsake them. Conducting them from conquest to conquest, till he shall bring them off more than conquerors,—themselves subdued, grace triumphant over the flesh,—no danger of war again. The Spirit thus continues unceasingly to strive, until the enemy is trodden under our feet,—and the enemy last conquered is death; and when the believer shall see his foes lying in chains at his feet, then the soul, thrilling with love and gratitude to the Spirit, whose strivings had prevailed, shall still give one more parting glance to the earthly territory, over which it has passed, and calmly laying down the helmet, the sword, and the shield, shall say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.” Then shall the striving of the Spirit be completed, in the presentation of the soul in its star-bright purity, perfect in the Divine likeness, before the throne with exceeding joy. And, amidst the rapturous joys of heaven, will the soul remember the innumerable instances in which the

Spirit's strivings were signally successful, in subduing depraved passions and overcoming the power of ignorance, and in facilitating the progress through dangers, foes, and snares to conduct to its present state; and this remembrance will add fervour to the love and intensity to the gratitude of the soul to the Spirit of all grace for ever and ever. While in innumerable instances, the strivings of the Spirit are thus happily consummated in the eternal joy and glory of the immortal soul, yet it is a painful truth, that there are many, who have felt some of the Spirit's strivings, who have done despite unto the Spirit of grace, and who have incurred the awful sentence, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." To avert such a calamity, being more extensively felt, the Lord has graciously caused the warning to be recorded, "My Spirit shall *not always* strive with man." From this solemn truth, it is evident,

That the time in which the Spirit carries on his work on the minds of men is limited. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit can vanquish the most obdurate and most daring forms of depravity; this is illustrated and confirmed by the facts of past history. Yet, perfectly consistent with this truth, there are circumstances so clearly indicative of the discontinuance of his gracious operations, that whenever these circumstances occur, they may be rea-

sonably interpreted as the voice of the Spirit, saying, "Hitherto I will go, but no further." It is very desirable that those circumstances should be most distinctly pointed out, that their occurrence may be deprecated, and a holy vigilance maintained to appreciate and improve the operations of the Spirit, while such operations are continued. Among these circumstances must be noticed—

I. *The discontinuance of those means, by which the Spirit ordinarily acts on the minds of men.* When the apostles visited Lystra and Derbe,—“and there they preached the Gospel,”—a new era commenced in those cities, new light shone on them; then the Spirit gave satisfactory intimations of gracious designs towards the inhabitants, and brought himself into immediate contact with their hearts. As though his voice said, “I have set my heart on the salvation of many in these cities, and notwithstanding the inveterate and determined depravity of their nature, fortified as it is by impure habits, and idolatrous superstitions, I will, despite all these strongholds of sin, have mercy on them; and will therefore send my servants to warn, beseech, entreat them; and while they address the reason, I will affect the heart, and strive with them that they may be saved.” And the increase of means of this order, being under the control of the unerring wisdom of the Spirit, every additional means of grace, seems to be a new form of

reiterating the same sentiment. An increase of the means of grace among any people is a token for good, especially if such an increase of means, be accompanied with a desire to attend and improve them. God speaks by events. And he is wise who can understand them. Events like those described, are the words of God saying, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give an expected end." If the introduction and the increase of the means of grace have a voice, and this no devout student of the word of God can doubt; then, it may with propriety be asked, Is there not also some communication of the Divine mind when means are materially diminished or entirely withdrawn? Such a withdrawalment is indicative of Jehovah's displeasure, and of a cessation of those blessings the Lord was wont to impart while the means were continued. The removal of the ark from the camp of Israel was a calamity deeply to be deplored, though the ark was but a symbol of the Divine presence. And when the Lord spake not to his people by prophet, by Urim and Thummim, nor by sign from heaven, it was regarded as a proof of his retirement, at least for a season, from the superintendence of Israel's affairs. He intended they should so interpret his conduct. "I will go and return to my place, and in their affliction they will seek me early." In a similar way, the Lord in ancient times said to his

people, "I will not strive with them," when he solemnly declared by his prophet, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, and they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." And though the abundance of means which exists in this country, may induce some to think that this prediction can never be accomplished in their experience, yet let it not be forgotten, that *He* "who does as he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth," has all resources under his control, and can with infinite ease, either remove an individual from all access to the means which are too lightly esteemed, or entirely remove the means from him. And what he can do in reference to an individual, he can also do in reference to any community. The history of the church at Ephesus affords a painful illustration of the point under consideration. That church had many illustrious proofs of the striving of the Spirit—from that church, the Lord made many vessels of mercy, meet for glory. But it subsequently forgot its first love, and lapsed in a cold formality and ruinous worldliness, so that He who walketh amidst the seven golden candlesticks, said unto them, "Remember therefore, from whence thou

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art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Even this threatening is a striving of the Spirit ; the *repetition* of the exhortation to *repent*, is expressive of the reluctance of the Divine mind to execute the threatening he had uttered. The Lord gave them space for repentance ; but instead of repenting, they waxed worse and worse, and where the Schechinali once shone, there Ichabod was written. The vital and vitalising spirit had departed ; Ephesus has stood for the last fifteen centuries, as a monument on which the finger of the Lord has written in indelible characters, “ My Spirit shall not *always* strive with man.” Surely, a subject like this ought to lead to great searchings of heart. Are there not some localities, even in our own country, where, though religious ordinances and means are continued, yet are they not of an inferior order compared with those formerly enjoyed ? Does the ministry of the Gospel, in some places, appear with the same attractive and salutary influence, as it did on former occasions ? Are there as many instances in some congregations, of souls awakening, and turning unto God as formerly ? Are the numbers of infidels, and blasphemers becoming believing and holy men as numerous as they might be ? The answer to such inquiries will be obvious to many readers. The present depressed

and worldly state of the church seems to present a scene, very similar to that, which Ezekiel in vision beheld when the cloud of glory was seen moving from its place, and standing over the threshold of the door of the temple. Oh that the church would humble herself before God, and repent, and importunately pray, that the Holy Spirit would put his hand again a second time to the work, and revive his drooping church. May each one concerned in this important subject, lay it to heart, and avail himself of all the facilities afforded for spiritual improvement ere the Spirit shall write, "I will no longer strive with them," by a removal of those means which have been slighted and misimproved! Then the Sabbath services, the oft-returning seasons for prayer—the Holy Bible, and the minister, who was wont to plead with you, and to wrestle with God for you, shall be gone, gone to return no more.

II. Another indication of the cessation of the Spirit's striving, is, *a determined and settled impenitence*. The principles of depravity are so strong, that, were they not kept in subjection by Divine influence, men would become monsters in sin. And such they really are, when the Holy Spirit ceases to strive with them. Such was Pharaoh when left to himself; and when it is written, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," that is, the Lord let him alone, and all the depraved elements of his nature exerted their uncontrolled influence. His

conscience sank into a deadly torpor, his judgment became infatuated, his will carried captive by passion, and his heart impervious to every appeal. A relentless impenitence, a determined perseverance in sin, showed that God had left him to himself. No misery is more to be deprecated than that contained in the anathema, "He is joined to idols, let him alone." A fatal insensibility pervades the soul,—truth shines, but her light is not perceived, providence continues to teach, but the impressive lessons are unheeded,—compassion sheds her tears, but no sympathetic emotions are awakened,—conscience exists, but its voice is not heard,—all seem plainly to indicate, that upon every avenue of the soul is written, "THE DOOR IS SHUT." As long as any symptoms of sorrow for sin exist, there is an evidence that the Spirit strives with the soul; but when all emotions of compunction for sin, seem to have left the soul, it is a painful evidence that the heart has been hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that the Spirit has retired from that heart. This is the sinful state, which indissolubly binds the guilt of sin to the sinner, in that he has done despite unto the Spirit of all grace. However deep his depravity, there was hope it would be eradicated by the omnipotent and gracious Spirit,—however aggravated his sins, there was hope that they would be pardoned by that blood "which cleanseth from all sin." But when these remedial

provisions of sovereign grace are repelled by confirmed impenitence, there remains no more sacrifice for sin,—no other means which can be effective for the rescue of the soul.

III. *The entire and final bereavement of reason, is a painful signal that the Spirit has ceased to strive.* Mental health is a blessing which is seldom duly appreciated: it is the capacity for improving and enjoying every other blessing. Without it, the most elevated pleasures of earth, and the sublimest prospects of heaven, are a complete blank. Its continuance is the season of hope, and the limit of human responsibility. Its withdrawment is the knell of hope, and the beginning of the night, in which no man can work. Then what remains undone, must remain undone for ever. Then the expressions of the tenderest affection, meet with no response,—the exhortations of devout piety, are unheeded,—truths the most solemn and affecting, are not understood,—the most importunate prayer is heard, without one corresponding feeling,—and even the remonstrances of conscience, are as wild, unmeaning jargon in the soul. These remarks, of course, apply only to those, who have sinned away the time of their mental health, and are destitute of the renewal of the Spirit, and in this state are finally bereft of their reason. It is a fact, which, alas! is of frequent occurrence. Ministers have to

witness it, and feel, that sympathy, and exhortation, and prayer, are useless. From such a scene they retire, and take up the exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah, "Give glory to the Lord, your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Thus, from what they have witnessed, they more and more earnestly entreat others, whose reason is yet vigorous, "to work while it is called day, because *the night cometh, when none can work.*"

If in other cases, where the time of mental health has been a time of spiritual diligence and enjoyment, —a time of faith on Christ, and communion with the Spirit,—a time of progressive meekness for heaven,—and at last, in the taking down of the tabernacle, derangement has come on, then, how consolatory the thought—the affairs of the soul for eternity were settled; the house was set in order, before reason's power was impaired, and the Holy Spirit, having completed his work, peacefully bears the soul away, from the shattered tenement it inhabited! The summons came, and though the carrying of it into effect, gave a shock to the physical and the intellectual man, yet it found the soul ready, having nothing to do but to arise, depart, and be with Christ. Then, though no sentences of holy confidence, or of triumphant joy, were heard,—

though no words of prayer or praise were uttered,—though no texts of holy writ were repeated,—though no dying testimony to the truth of the Gospel, and the faithfulness of Christ were borne; yet *the living testimony*, the witness of a life, when body and mind were in sound health, should be incalculably more satisfactory, than a few sentences expressed amidst the excitements of disease and approaching death. Though it would be gratifying to the believer, and to surviving friends, if, in addition to the witness of the life, there could be also the calm and intelligent confidence in Christ expressed in death, and so an abundant entrance be administered to him, to the joy of his Lord; yet, if one must be wanting, let it be the dying, rather than the living testimony.

Dear reader, how slender and uncertain is the tenure by which you hold your reason, you may imagine by the facts, which are occurring around you. You have seen the man, who but yesterday was buoyant in health, and sprightliness of spirit, sparkling with wit, and glowing with mirth, thy ever-cheerful and constant companion, now sunk in the gloom of a confirmed, sullen melancholy, or raving in a wild incoherence. Nor is it here to be told, how far an indulged dissipation, and a struggling with a restless conscience, have aided in enfeebling the power of reason. How long yours may be continued, or how suddenly you may lose

mind, beyond the power of human suasion to produce. And yet men will presume that sufficient notice will be given, and that they will have sufficient wisdom to profit by the notice ; and that, knowing that the end of life is drawing nigh,—that the time for the Spirit's striving is about to close, they shall, in one short day, at most, in one short week, of pain, of sickliness, and delirium, and innumerable other disadvantages, *do that*, which in a whole life of health, vigour, reason, and abundant faculties, they had neglected to do. Impressions, early impressions of truth, have been effaced ; convictions have been stifled ; resolves have been violated ; feelings have been suppressed ; and conscience rendered more and more insensible. The Spirit was once acknowledged, and his presence felt ; but now despised and withdrawn. Surely this is the masterpiece of infatuation, that men should imagine that a whole life should be spent in striving against the Spirit, and that its last hours should be gladdened with hallowed joy. O that men would act under the influence of their better convictions, break the demon-spell which binds them, and live for eternity ; that when time shall close, they may feel a hallowed congeniality with the infinity of bliss prepared for those, who being holy, shall be holy still ! O that the Spirit would put forth his grace, and make men willing in the day of his power, and induce a cheerful submission to his

authority, and enjoyment of his love ! And then, the close of life, will be the time when the Spirit ceases to strive ; just because it is the period, when his work of grace shall be consummated ; and the soul, for ever emancipated from the power and being of sin, shall rise to take its place in the mansions of the redeemed and sanctified, and rising shall sing, “Thanks be unto God, who hath given the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Some persons, upon reading the preceding pages, may be disposed to conclude, that they have never been the subjects of the Spirit’s striving, and that, therefore, they have no concern in the sentiments advanced. Such a conclusion is premature and unwarranted. That they have not yet become renewed and submissive to the Spirit, in the day of his power, is, alas ! too evidently true ; but it is not true, that *nothing* has been done, on the part of the Holy Spirit, to make them so. Let them reflect, why their lot was cast in a country, where the means the Spirit graciously employs abound ? Why, from their earliest infancy, have they been instructed in the truths of salvation, and warned of their danger ? Why has the Bible been put into their hands, and parental prayers, and consistent piety, commended its truths to their hearts ? Why have afflictions and trials, in almost every diversified form, befallen them, and yet dangers averted, and their lives spared ? Why have

sudden bereavements taken place in the circle of their family, or their friendship? Why, in attending on the ministry of the Gospel, or in hearing some truth in private, have fears and anxieties been awakened, which they found it as difficult to forget, as to resist? Why have the reproofs and reproaches of conscience, and the apprehensions of a coming judgment, been almost insupportable? These are surely the arrangements and doings of Him, who delights not in the death of a sinner,—the movements of the Spirit that *strives* with men. Nothing but a dastardly atheism can prevent them from admitting, that all these events and emotions, were parts of his ways, who is excellent in counsel, and mighty in working; and as such are to be interpreted as gracious intimations of the Spirit's love and grace towards them. "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet men perceive it not." The remembrance of calls disregarded, will aggravate the woe of eternity. And that woe shall confirm the veracity of Jehovah, when he said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

SECTION VII.

ON THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT.

“ I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the
love of the Spirit.”^a—PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

“ God is love.” This truth is the sun and centre, in the system of revelation ; and, as every planet derives light from the sun, and aids us in forming some faint idea of the brightness of the source which lights up each orb,—so every portion of sacred writ draws its brightness from this centre, and assists us to under-

^a A diversity of opinions has been entertained, as to the real meaning of this passage. Among many authorities of importance, it may be desirable to notice the following. The eminent and pious ROBERT HALL observes, “ The expression is capable of three meanings ; it may mean either the love, of which the Spirit is the author in the heart of the believer ; or the love of which the Spirit is himself the object ; or, lastly, and most probably, the love which the Spirit bears to them that believe.” Dr. Doddridge interprets the expression as denoting “ the love which is the genuine fruit of the Spirit.” “ Some,” he remarks, “ would explain it of the love which the Spirit bears to us, or of the affection which we owe to that gracious agent ; and were we certain that either of these were the genuine sense, important consequences would follow.” The editor of the work from which Mr. Hall’s opinion

stand it more fully, so that the devout student of the sacred volume, looking up to God, can say, "In thy light shall I see light." "God is love." This is the grand and all-important truth, which it becomes man to know and believe. To reveal and elucidate this, seems to be the principal design for which inspiration was given, and the Scriptures were written. All other truths, facts, declarations, warnings, threatenings, and promises of sacred Scripture, are only repeated illustrations of this one great essential truth. As though, when God set his heart upon making a revelation to man, he determined to reveal *himself*. And for this purpose, he gave line upon line, and precept upon precept, that man might be furnished with a transcript of the Divine character. This one truth, it most became man to know; this believed and felt, disarms the prejudices of the human heart against God,—impresses

is quoted, observes, "Mr. Hall has preferred the most exalted and the most interesting of these three acceptations; the most probable, also, as that which takes 'the love of the Spirit,' in a sense parallel with 'the love of God,' in the apostolic benediction, and with 'the love of Christ,' as mentioned, Rom. viii. 35, 2 Cor. v. 14, and that which best agrees with the claim of Christ thus associated with the claim of the Spirit." This view, in the author's opinion, appears best to agree with the design of the apostle, and to harmonise with the ordinary rules of Scripture interpretation. "I beseech you by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit," i. e. by the gratitude you owe to Christ, for what he has done *for* you, and to the Spirit, for what he has done *in* you, "that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me."

the mind with the equity and benevolence of the Divine government,—exhibits the unreasonableness and enormity of sin,—furnishes a powerful motive to repentance,—kindles the most ardent love, and ensures the most sincere and devoted obedience.

“God is love.” Love is not a mere attribute, but the essence of the Divine nature. Angels cannot comprehend that essence. Our minds, feeble by nature, and degraded by our pursuits and habits, are slow in their perceptions of truth in general, and exceedingly slow in their perceptions of truth, relating to the Divine nature. But to aid us in knowing himself, God has in all his communications with man unfolded the love of his heart. The formation of man, and the circumstances of his primary state, were but forms in which the love of God was embodied. The conduct of God after man had sinned, was an expression of his love, as he proclaimed his abhorrence of sin, the only cause of man’s misery. The first promise was but a ray from the eternal source of love. All the types and subsequent predictions of the Messiah, were but mementoes of the purpose of love to be accomplished in Christ’s mediatorial work. And when the fulness of time was come, God was manifested in the flesh,—Christ appeared,—an incarnation of eternal love. He who saw Christ, saw the Father also. The fact of our Lord’s appearance on earth, and the object for which he

came, furnished a clearer and more enlarged view of the Divine character, than all anterior revelations combined ; a view which so powerfully impressed the mind of the beloved disciple, that he exclaimed, " HEREIN is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins." Herein is the love of THE FATHER in *giving* his Son, and in giving him for *such a purpose*. " GOD SO LOVED the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of THE SON was set forth in his voluntarily undertaking the work of human redemption. His gracious undertaking was an index to the love of his heart. " Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." All the poverty, temptation, insult, sorrow, calumny, and suffering he endured, were distinctly known by him, as the attendants on his errand of love, before he left the world of glory. In his life, sufferings, and death, the most abundant and convincing proofs of love—deep, disinterested love—are afforded. " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." " But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." This is love indeed ! Angels themselves stoop down to earth to learn new lessons of

Divine love, while they hear the church exclaim, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." The scenery from Bethlehem to the wilderness of temptation,—from the wilderness of temptation to the garden of Gethsemane,—from Gethsemane to Calvary,—and from Calvary to the new sepulchre in the grounds of the Arimathean Joseph, while the principal figure there, was, **THE SON OF GOD**, furnished to angelic observers a more instructive lesson, and a more pleasing illustration of the Divine character, than they had ever derived from the scenery of the heights of Moriah,—the fires of Sinai,—the clefts of Horeb,—Carmel's top, or cloud of glory on Zion's hill. It might have been expected that the objects, whose happiness was contemplated, by this manifestation of Divine love, would have promptly and gladly accepted the blessings, thus provided and secured, especially, when it was known, that the utmost degree of destitution and misery existed, which every human means had failed to relieve, and for which the blessings of a Redeemer's love alone were efficient. Such an expectation would be reasonable from the principle of self-love, admitted to be common to every intelligent creature. But despite even this principle, man remains an unconcerned and unmoved repellant. The earth quakes—the rocks rend—the mountains shake, the sun enwraps himself in clouds of thick darkness, and angels

gaze amazed, and find new cause for love and gratitude to God,—yea, all creation shows some emotion at this unexampled display of Divine love, but *man*—deluded, obdurate man—alone is indifferent. So far as man is concerned, the love of THE FATHER in the *bestowment* of his unspeakable gift, and the love of THE SON, in his voluntary, vicarious suffering, and death, seem to be in vain, and fall short of accomplishing the reconciliation of a guilty world to God. A stranger to our world and the real cause of man's insensibility, yet knowing the gracious and suitable provision made, might in wonder and astonishment say, Here is the physician, and here is the balm,—the skill of the one is unerring,—the efficacy of the other is infallible, and yet, why is not the hurt of this people healed? The mighty barrier to the benefit,—to the salvation of the sinner, is to be found in the deep-rooted depravity,—the daring and obstinate resistance of the human heart. Who shall roll away this stone? Who shall open the door of the sepulchre, that the light of life—the power of the resurrection, may enter in? Angels cannot do it, for they shudder at, and shrink from the horrible form which depravity has assumed. Man cannot do it, for it requires a power, a skill, and an influence which he cannot command. No power less than omnipotence, no skill less than infinite wisdom, no influence less than that which can reach the innermost recesses of the soul can do it.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT engages to undertake the work of coming into immediate contact with the depraved heart, and to bring all his might and grace to bear upon the moral impediments of a sinner's salvation,—to uproot depravity,—to subdue enmity and pride, and to apply the atonement to the man and *heal him*. This is only another illustration of the truth, “God is love;” for herein is *the love of the Spirit*, that he makes the soul willing in the day of his power, and that he takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to the mind of man.

The love of the Spirit consists in his own free and gracious determination, to lay open his infinite resources for the restoration of man to the likeness and enjoyment of God. Every part of the sinner's salvation illustrates the love of the ever-blessed Elohim. The grace and purpose of THE FATHER,—the voluntary and vicarious work of THE SON,—and the influence and operations of THE HOLY SPIRIT on the heart, harmoniously combine to show the unity of the design of that God, who is LOVE. The love of the Spirit, like his nature, is subject to no change, but is the ever-glowing and tender compassion of God towards the soul that needs his purifying and enlightening influences, until the consummation of the soul's happiness in the realms of eternal light and glory.

Genuine love ever aims at enhancing the excellence

and increasing the enjoyment of its object. This is the peculiar characteristic of the love, the Spirit shows to the sinner. Sin has deformed and defiled the soul,—to the eradication of sin, is the attention of the Spirit directed, and all his influences concur; to restore a moral purity and beauty, even to make the soul after the Divine image and likeness, is the ultimate result that his love contemplates.

His love is like the love of God the Father, as disinterested, as it is free and unmerited. In his own high and holy place, and in the unmeasurable resources in himself, he is infinitely happy and glorious, amidst the hosts of holy angels; yet he designs to bring his own purity, the cause of all happiness, into the human heart, to implant, to invigorate and mature that cause, until its highest results shall be produced in the perfection of hallowed enjoyment in the heavenly world.

The love of the Son, consisted in his fixed and eternal purpose to annihilate every *legal* barrier that stood in the way of a sinner's salvation, and to render the fullest exercise of mercy to fallen man, consistent with the holiness of the Divine nature, and the most righteous claims of inflexible and uncompromising justice; and that he would accomplish this purpose of his heart, at the amazing cost of resigning for a season all the sanctity and joyousness of heaven,—of allying himself to human nature, in a way that he should know its infirm-

ities, sorrows, and woes, without contracting one stain of its sinfulness,—of enduring a long series of mental agonies, and pangs of spirit before unknown to men or angels, and of passing through all the bitterness of death, mingled with the frown of the Eternal ; the love of the Spirit consists in his gracious and eternal purpose to remove and destroy every *moral* or *spiritual* cause, which existing, morally disqualifies man for heaven,—that would ruin the immortal soul, or impede the atonement of Christ, from extending its saving benefits to the heart ; and this Godlike purpose he will achieve, though it require that he should bring himself into immediate contact with the heart, and dwell in it, and though he should endure all the repulse, opposition, and strife, which ingenuity could invent, and malignant enmity could maintain. The love of the Spirit undertook the work of enlightening, convincing, subduing, renewing, and sanctifying the heart, and of helping and comforting the sinner with the richest consolations derived from the atoning sacrifice, and complete righteousness of Christ, though he knew that in this undertaking he should be resisted, grieved, and quenched. Yet the Spirit loved man, and therefore, notwithstanding the enmity, rebellion, and obstinacy of the human heart, his love proceeds so to exert its influence on the will of man, that he shall choose the things he once despised and rejected, and spurn

the objects in which he once confided and delighted,—fixing his love on the things of the Spirit, and directing his abhorrence to the things of the flesh. And that this is the developement of the love of the Spirit, may be seen in the way by which this state of mind has been produced,—views of Divine truth have been presented to the mind, feelings have been awakened in the heart, motives have been brought to bear on the will, and resolves have been formed, strengthened, and confirmed. All this process has been effected by the continued influence and untiring perseverance of the Spirit's love. And this has been conducted in a way so gentle, that has been perfectly consistent with the character of man as a responsible and voluntary agent, so that the man has perceived, felt, and resolved, as if by his own free volition, while God has been working within him to will and to do of his own good pleasure. This is the love of the Spirit, that “he wills not the death of a sinner, but that he should repent and live;” and therefore in innumerable ways does he plead with the sinner, saying, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

After all our thinkings on the nature of the Spirit's love, it must be acknowledged, that it has heights and depths, lengths and breadths, which eternity alone shall reveal. It becomes us devoutly to meditate on the glorious theme, while conscious of our incapacity

thoroughly to comprehend it, to exclaim with amazement and gratitude, O the depth of the riches of this wondrous love, which passeth knowledge !

Our meditations on this sublime and interesting theme, may lead, by the Spirit's aid, to further discoveries of his love, and to fresh motives to love, and gratitude to the Source of every holy principle, and the Author of fervent prayer.

The manner in which the love of the Spirit is displayed, may be seen

I. In *the objects* on whom his grace is specially exercised. Apostles and early Christians were constantly mindful of this display of the love of the Spirit, —a manifestation of love rendered more conspicuous and impressive on account of the *unworthiness* of the objects. The Holy Spirit had condescended to take up his abode in hearts, where Satan's power and human depravity, had exerted their most direful influence. The apostle writing to the Corinthians, put forth this sentiment in a very emphatic manner, " Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye

are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by THE SPIRIT OF GOD.” The great view of reconciliation by the work of Christ, exhibits God the Father *reconciled to the world*; but the whole design of the ministration of the Gospel, and of the work of the Spirit is *to reconcile the world* to God,—this is clearly expressed by the apostle, when he said, “We beseech you, as in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” And that personal and actual reconciliation is effected by the Spirit affecting the heart with suitable views of the atonement,—so that enmity the most determined and obdurate is overcome. From the evidence thus afforded of the love of the Spirit, a most important argument is derived, bearing on all the future stages of Christian experience, until the salvation of the soul is completed in the enjoyment of heaven. “If while we were enemies we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.” The change from the condition of enmity to that of friendship being accomplished by a free and unexpected display of love, much more certainly shall all the blessings be bestowed, which his present condition, entitles the reconciled sinner to expect. That very obstinacy which refused and rejected the great atoning Sacrifice, was itself an evidence of a most desperate state of moral degradation, and might have been a sufficient reason why the Spirit should have left the

sinner to the misery he had chosen. The heart that could reject the provision of infinite love, as set forth in the work of Christ, would from the fact itself, give the most indubitable proof of its entire destitution of every moral quality which could claim the attention, or merit the love of the Spirit. And yet, on hearts whose antipathy to Christ and his Gospel had assumed a most malignant form, the Spirit condescends to operate, to enlighten, to constrain, and to make vessels of mercy.

The unworthiness of the objects, to whom the love of the Spirit is shown, does not arise from the infinite disparity which must ever exist between the creature and the Creator; but from the fearful moral discrepancy which exists between the holiest of beings, and the utmost degree of impurity and defilement the human heart can possess. Yet though sin, is the thing which, above all others, the Lord hates, it is to that object which has rendered itself so odious by sin, that the love of the Spirit is extended, that there the very roots of sin may be withered,—that there its baneful effects may be counteracted, and that the scene where vice was once rampant may be made the region of light and purity,—the place of holiness and love, where the Spirit rejoices in the triumphs he has won,—rests in his love, and makes the place of his feet glorious.

The hurt which sin had inflicted on the moral

constitution of man, was as offensive to the Spirit as it must be fatal to man, unless omnipotence interpose. That hurt the Spirit undertakes to heal. He effects the cure by removing the blindness of the soul, taking away the moral impediment which prevented the atonement being efficacious on the heart. Just as when the Israelites, bitten by the fiery serpent, scattered over the plain,—the remedy of Divine appointment is made, the proclamation is sounded throughout the camp, “Look and live;”—but it is found that more than one-half the multitude, have received an injury of the organs of vision, even to blindness; on them the benevolence of almighty power is exerted, that their sight is restored with a strong impulse to exert the restored sense, by looking to the appointed remedy,—so the Holy Spirit comes into immediate contact with the sinner, and removes the cause of his offensiveness in the sight of God, and of misery to himself. He proves his love to the sinner, by taking from him, the impediment to his happiness, and the inherent mark of his disgrace. An illustration of the love of the Spirit, like that which is furnished by the *unworthiness of the objects*, must impress the mind with the *disinterested* character of the love that could be extended to beings in whom no moral excellences were found, and from whom no adequate return could be expected. Next to the objects on which the love of the Spirit is set, may be noticed,

II. *The great change he effects on the real condition and relative character of the sinner.* His character was that of a culprit under the sentence of death, and his condition, was that of an invalid, with a mortal disease. If even the sentence were revoked, the disease would destroy him, and the disease prevents him from understanding the terms of his reprieve, and from accepting the full pardon that is offered. Now the Spirit, in manifesting his love to the sinner, does not leave him to the influences which ordinarily affect vegetation, and which influences are uniformly genial upon plants and trees of a strong and healthy constitution ; but which have nothing in them remedial to the sickly, or transforming to the bad. His love is displayed, by bringing special influences to bear upon plants and trees that are altogether unsound, and are *marked to be cut down* ; he produces new life and health at the very root,—he continues to bring his influences to quicken and invigorate the circulation, until verdure and fertility appear, where signs of present dearth and approaching death were evidently apparent. To speak without a figure, the Spirit sees the sinner as he really is, and in his relation to the moral government of God ; his condition is one of total depravity, his relation, that of criminal before the Governor of the universe. Depravity is the cause of his real miserable condition and of his relative character. Against depravity in its hydra-headed forms

the Spirit's influences are directed ;—unbelief the tyrant fiend is subdued,—faith is implanted,—the terms of cancelment of guilt are accepted,—gratitude and love for present pardon, now glow in the soul as the most active and powerful motives to devoted obedience. The change is a great one, and worthy the agent, by whom it has been effected. The criminal becomes the adopted child in the family of the monarch against whose government he had revolted. The slave of sin, becomes the willing servant of the holiest of beings. The vessel of darkness and defilement, becomes a vessel filled with light and glowing with purity. The subjects of this change display no reluctance to acknowledge the love that designed it, and the power that achieved it; on the contrary, all those who experimentally know this change, unhesitatingly ascribe it to the grace of the Holy Spirit, while they address each other in language like this, “ Behold what manner of love is this, that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ; and if now, we are his sons, it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” The honour of sonship,—the title of heir,—the hope of inheritance, are now conferred. The dispositions of filial affection and obedience are produced, as strong distinctive principles. The change in the real condition, is not less than that which has

passed on the relative character. Every evidence concurs to show that he, “who is born of God does not *practise* sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he would not sin since he is born of God. In this, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.” The subjects of this change have now the elements of the most exalted happiness within them; they can never cease to admire and adore the love that gave them the taste, to appreciate the purifying and ennobling pursuits in which they live as their appropriate element, and the elevating sources of enjoyment to which they have access. The change effected has been a radical one. Not merely existing misery has been abolished; but the very grade of the intellectual and moral capacity has been raised, and sources of enjoyment adapted to that moral elevation have been opened. These sources are immutable in their fulness and freshness; and the present access enjoyed, is only preparatory to still more exalted bliss, where neither the feebleness of capacity, nor any interposing causes, shall prevent the full participation of enjoyment which surpasses the conception of the purest and loftiest imagination. Exalted as is the present condition, of the subjects of this change, it is but preliminary and preparatory to a condition, which shall exclude every moral stain,—every cause of sorrow,—and which shall furnish every means for the most exalted happiness.

But to this ultimate end, the Spirit subordinates all the vicissitudes of time, that by the changes in which individuals are placed, principles may be elicited and exercised. This leads to a third illustration of the manner, in which the love of the Spirit is manifested.

III. *In the developement and maturity of gracious principles.* In this is the great demonstration of genuine love, and especially of the love of the Spirit, aiming at the enhancement of the moral excellence, as well as the increased happiness of its objects. The change which has been effected, involves the implantation of all the elements of moral beauty; but these elements are introduced amidst principles uncongenial to their existence, and inimical to their developement and growth. Here faith is wrought in a heart full of unbelief, and where the habits of doubt and distrust have long been cherished. Yet by the constant care of the Holy Spirit, and his interest in the happiness of the soul, he continues to invigorate the new principle and to subdue the remnants of evil, until faith becomes the all-pervading characteristic of the renewed mind. To accomplish this work, he subordinates all the ordinances of his house, the truths of his word, and all the vicissitudes of providence. As though the love of the Spirit were ever intent on answering the prayer of Christ, "Sanctify them through thy truth." Love and holiness, have been wrought where enmity and

impurity had long reigned,—imparted their baneful influence, and burnt in their own mark in all but indelible characters. But gratitude in all her genial influence sustained by the gracious Spirit, inflames and invigorates the principle of love to God, until it becomes the one ruling motive of the soul. Delight in God is the new and ever active instinct of the renovated heart. It ever turns to the object of its delight; and constant meditation on the supreme good produces assimilation. And the love of the Spirit exhibits itself in averting those causes, which might distract the attention, or pollute the mind, and in affording those facilities, which give fixedness to the thoughts,—ardour to the love,—firmness to the purpose,—and fervour to the prayer, “Make me holy, even as my Father in heaven is holy.” The prayer, thus breathed, is awakened by that Spirit whose love has resolved, “Let us make this man in our own likeness.” And upon this purpose the heart of the Spirit is fixed, and all his influences combine in deepening every lineament of the moral likeness of God. He will *finish* his own work. And the more the soul approximates to the likeness of God, the more it enhances in happiness. The full maturity of one, is the completion of the other. The assurance of the Spirit, that he will not forsake the work of his own hands, but that he will adorn the soul with every grace in full perfection, and present it all beauteous in holi-

ness, in the heavenly world, is a proof and pledge of the Spirit's love, which cannot fail to kindle the gratitude, and awaken the confidence of the believer. All the promises concur in showing that "this is the will of God, even your sanctification." These promises furnish a motive to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And the love of the Spirit will not permit the soul to be alone in this struggle, but while the soul is working out its own salvation, "God is working in him, both to will, and to do of his own good pleasure." Here are the solid grounds of a believer's hope, that when the conflict with sin and the struggles of mortality are over, he shall "be satisfied awaking up in the Divine likeness." Yet with this glorious object of anticipation in view, the believer is deeply sensible of innumerable evils, which exist within,—of many weaknesses, of many backslidings, and of many provocations to the Spirit to suspend his gracious operations, and must be induced often to reflect on the love of the Spirit, as seen

IV. *In the forbearance displayed.* To the self-complaisant and indifferent, who are satisfied with their spiritual condition, just because they never examine and search into the indications of health or sickness the soul presents, the exercise of the Spirit's forbearance is treated by them as of no importance. To the

truly humble, vigilant Christian, who lives in the daily exercise of self-examination, and is deeply conscious and sorrowful that he has still "an evil heart of unbelief, and prone to depart from the living and true God," this subject is one of painful interest; his roaming fancy,—his wandering thoughts,—his sinful emotions,—and his irresolute purposes so often grieve the Spirit, that he can never cease to admire and adore the love that has borne with him to the present day. He sincerely mourns he has provoked the Spirit in all his offices to withdraw his gracious influence, and leave the mind to a wretchedness and a gloom which no language can describe. Yet amidst these provocations, the Spirit has exercised a forbearance worthy of himself.

This will appear more evident, as applicable to his office as *The Instructor* of his people. Ample as are the revelations of his mind in his word, yet these are seldom read and pondered with all that intense interest which their intrinsic worth demands. And when the meaning and beauty of these truths, are sought by prayer to the Holy Spirit, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," he is prompt in answering the request, giving light and kindling emotion to understand and feel the truth. He gives "line upon line and precept upon precept." Constantly is he affording some fresh facility to the disciple of Christ, to advance in the knowledge of the

truth. But if a case occur, wherein the means of instruction which have been employed, have not produced a clear perception of the truth as it is in Jesus, then the Spirit uses other means, more adapted to the mind and circumstances of the individual, still keeping to his purpose, "I will instruct him and teach him in the way in which he should go." He bears with the stupidity and dulness of the soul, though often reminding those who are slow to learn, as he addressed the Hebrews, "That when for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which are the first principles of the oracles of God." The forbearance, which his love sustains, is here strikingly displayed, in that, instead of giving up the soul to ignorance, because its progress in knowledge is so discouraging,—he graciously varies the modes of his teaching,—still, pursues his work of instruction,—so that the lessons, which were not learned by precept, were learned by discipline,—a process more painful but more effective. The soul surveying the love of the Spirit, in his long-continued forbearance in not withdrawing his instructions, and grateful for the discipline exercised, records its testimony, "Through affliction have I learned thy precepts."

His forbearance is illustrated in the exercise of his office as *The Author of Prayer*, and the originator of

every holy desire in the heart. He “teaches how to pray, and what to pray for.” He awakens desires, yet how often are these desires suppressed, and the ardour of supplication chilled by the worldly influence to which the mind has thoughtlessly yielded! Prayer has become infrequent and formal,—its savour and its glow have departed, and the Spirit has grieved over a soul, whose communion with heaven, was once its vital motion and healthy exercise,—now scarcely breathing,—all the indications of glowing health have departed. To this state the soul has reduced itself, by suppressing holy desires and stifling feeling, as though the influence, which circulated like the health of the soul, had been checked. The Spirit has been provoked to say, “I will awaken no more desires there, I will no more impart the grace of supplication;” but no, he forbears to inflict this token of his displeasure, again he turns the prodigal’s heart from his husks to his father’s home,—again he revives his sunken spirit,—again imbues him with holy desires, and brings him to enjoy communion with the Most High, as a returning child enjoys the reconciled intercourse with the parent from whom he had roamed. The happy seasons of prayer once enjoyed, though fled, no more to return, yet the Spirit of grace and supplications, by his abounding love, repeats those seasons of hallowed delight, which

can be known only to those who have access to the fountain of all bliss,—the fulness of God in Christ Jesus.

Nor is the forbearance of the Holy Spirit as *The Sanctifier* of his people, a less conspicuous display of the love of the Spirit. Among the means and processes the Spirit directs to this important object,—the sanctification of the soul, the one which is the most prominent and influential is, “the love of God shed abroad in the heart.” This is the barometer of the soul, indicating its advance or its decline in holiness. As this love rises, so the soul bounds forward in all the ways of holy obedience and growing conformity to the Divine image ; as this love sinks, so the signs of cold indifference, formality, and apostacy appear. It is the design of the Spirit in all his operations, to give those views of Christ and his unbounded love to us, as shall inflame our love to him, secure for him the very throne of the heart, and induce us to esteem him as the Chief among ten thousands, and the altogether lovely. Yet notwithstanding all the Spirit’s operations to keep the heart fixed in all the ardour of love on Christ, and to carry on that assimilating process which love never fails to call into exercise—alas for the wayward and inconstant heart of man !—it will entertain a thousand idol guests, to the exclusion of the rightful God of the spiritual temple,—these idols exert a deteriorating and

defiling influence, and thus interrupt and retard the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. How great the provocation, for that Spirit to withdraw his gracious influence, when he sees his own work marred by the very being whom he designs to bless and make happy ! Only the love and forbearance worthy of God can account for the continued grace, which prevents the sentence from going forth, “ He is joined to idols, let him alone ;” yea, the surprising grace which continues to convince, to humble and restore the heart, until with the utmost fervour and sincerity, it exclaims,

“ The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.”

And what genuine believer is there, who does not see in this description a transcript of his own painful experience ? Oh that some reading this, may see and feel the love of the Spirit, and be induced by the powerful impulse of gratitude, to cleave closer to the Spirit, and prize more highly his hallowing operations,—remembering that in all the Spirit does, this is his purpose,—this is his will, even your sanctification !

Look once more at the forbearance of the Spirit as *The Comforter* of his people. How varied are his exceedingly great and precious promises ! How

appropriate and abundant are his consolations ! How worthy is he of the name of *The Comforter* ! There are wounds which he alone can heal, sorrows which he alone can soothe. When the tear of sympathy, the voice of friendship, and all the kind offices the heart can devise, have lost all their power to solace, even then the Spirit can suggest some important truth, and so affect the heart, that it shall perceive its meaning, feel its power, believe its verity, and a holy consolation shall pervade the soul, turning the night of sorrow into the morning of light and joy. The truth of God has thus been confirmed, and the trembling and dejected heart has experienced the faithfulness of God, when he said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." With evidence so satisfactory of the efficiency of the Spirit's consolations, it might be expected, that gratitude would bind the soul that had been comforted, in the closest and most indissoluble bonds to the Heavenly Comforter ; and that, in all future trials, sorrows, and conflicts, no other source of consolation, would be desired or sought. Instead of this, numerous are the instances, in which the soul has played the coward's part,—and in the time of conflict has been unmindful of the only source of its strength,—in the time of sorrow has resorted to forbidden, broken, and empty cisterns,—in the time of trial and perplexity, has

reposed on human policy, or has crouched at the shrine of worldly wisdom : having loosened her hold on the Spirit and on Christ, whom in all things the Spirit glorifies, the soul has ventured to try other sources, which promised, but never afforded help and consolation,—sources which in every age have proved deceptive, and against which the most solemn warnings have been recorded,—sources which have proved as rocks and whirlpools, wrecking and sinking souls, which have not the Spirit as their pilot. After such repeated proofs of love on the part of the Spirit, met by repeated proofs of ingratitude and distrust on the part of the soul, justly might the Spirit look upon the soul in its sorrows, and say, “Go and cry to the gods thou hast chosen.” He is God, and not man, and therefore we are not consumed. He forbears to inflict the stroke our ingratitude and wandering have deserved ; but as a father chides the child of his affection, so he gently reproves saying, “I, even I am he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, who shall be made as grass ; and forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ; and hast *feared* continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy ? and where is the fury of the oppressor ?” As though the Spirit, the Comforter of

his people, had said, Remember former times, when the fury of the oppressor terrified thee, and thou didst make the Lord thy refuge, how that fury was frustrated by the wisdom and power of the Lord. All his chidings and chastenings are designed to bring the soul from applying to broken cisterns, to live at the fountain of living waters. Amidst the ever-varying scenes of life,—its fleeting joys,—its blighted hopes,—its unexpected and severe bereavements,—its afflictions and perplexities, the Spirit, in all the unchangeableness of his love, sustains his office of Comforter, by the ample provision he has made in his promises and consolatory declarations for his suffering people. Though he has been again and again provoked to withdraw his consolation, yet the feeblest sigh of genuine repentance,—the heartfelt desire for his presence, cannot escape his notice ; and if he seem to delay, it is only that something offensive to his holy nature may be removed,—*the something*, in connexion with which, his consolation could not exist. And even when heart and flesh are about to fail, when death and the grave, in all their solemn reality, affect the mind, then does the Comforter, like a sun of heavenly brightness, shed a ray of light and warmth on every grace implanted in the soul,—faith enlivens under this genial influence, and the language of holy confidence is heard, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is

able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day ;” love revives, and the soul prefers the presence of Christ to all the joys that life can afford ; hope lifts up its drooping head, and imparts a cheering and buoyant power to the soul, while the immediate anticipation of being like Christ, fills the soul with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Thus the Spirit’s love, as the Comforter, is manifested in the life and the death of the believer, and that after he has been often grieved and provoked, so that the death-bed of the genuine believer not unfrequently presents the combination of most fervent gratitude mingled with intense sorrow, yea the gratitude giving pungency to the penitence, sometimes recorded in language like this, “I cannot find words to express my thankfulness to that gracious Spirit who brings to my remembrance the truths I have heard and read, with a freshness and power before unknown, and thus makes my consolations to abound ;—the fear of death he has taken away, my doubts are removed, my evidences of an interest in Christ are clear and satisfactory,—his own testimony with my spirit is now a reality,—my hold on Christ, and on Christ alone, is firm and unshaken : and am I indebted to the Holy Spirit the Comforter, for this happiness ? Can it be, that my slightings of his instructions, my rejecting and suppressing his influences,—my often grieving and vexing him, are all

forgiven? Oh what a proof of love, what occasion for sorrow, when I view my past treatment to him, a Being so lovely, so loving, and so worthy of my warmest love and most complete obedience! Ah wretch that I am that I could have so treated a Being, whose name, and nature, and doings are love!"

V. *The love of the Spirit may be further seen, in the ultimate happiness designed.* The present change realised, the sanctifying process commenced, and the consolations enjoyed, are only foretastes and preliminaries to the ultimate result contemplated. That result includes, the exemption from all the stain and misery of sin, and the enjoyment of all the purity and bliss of heaven. Each soul in the possession of this result shall stand in the heavenly temple, as a living pillar, bearing this inscription, "As sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded." The amazing love of Christ to the soul, has been seen, in the pardon of sin, in the justification of the sinner; and the love of the Spirit will be displayed, in the influence exerted on the thoughts, desires, and volitions of the sinner,—in the hallowed process begun,—in the conquest over propensities and habits, and in the perfection of the Divine likeness on the soul,—thus maturing the character, giving to it a moral fitness for the engagements and delights of the heavenly world. All the operations of the Spirit,—all the instructions of his word, and all the

discipline of his providence, were instrumental in enhancing the moral excellence of the soul, and in preparing it for the highest conceivable enjoyment in time, and making it meet for the surpassing glories of eternity. And as genuine love delights itself in the happiness of its object, and in the constancy of association, so the love of the Spirit imparts to the soul his own bliss, and places the soul in his own heaven, where nothing that defiles or disturbs can enter ; where the sources of infinite joy are ever accessible, and where the soul understands and feels what is meant by being “ filled with all the fulness of God,” and being in his presence, to go out no more for ever. Very far exceeding the most exalted thoughts we now have of the love of the Spirit, will be the views which the glorified soul shall have on its entrance to the heavenly world. In his light shall we see light. Intelligence unclouded by ignorance, unbiased by prejudice, and unwearied in exercise ;—love undiminished in its ardour, and undiverted from its proper object by any opposing influence ;—holiness in all its unsullied purity,—conformity to the likeness of him, who was ever the object of Jehovah’s complacency and delight, “ his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased ;”—joy, the most exalted and permanent, untainted by any medium, unchanged by any time,—the region is the fulness of joy,—and the scene of pleasures for evermore ; all these

shall in their combined beauty, be the portion,—the constituent elements of the character of that soul, whom the Spirit has loved. Could a redeemed and glorified soul, communicate to us his views and estimate of the love of the Spirit, we should learn more from this source in one short hour, than from years spent in the most elaborate thinking on this glorious theme. The love of the Spirit in regenerating the heart, shall be most clearly seen in the perfection of holiness, which shall be its portion in heaven ;—the love of the Spirit in adopting the sinner into the family of God, shall be most conspicuous when the soul takes possession of the inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. For this is the consummation of the Spirit's love, not merely that we should be called sons of God,—but that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Oh, that more of that assimilating process were realised now !—it would most effectually aid our conceptions of the love of the Spirit, which like the love of Christ, passeth knowledge.

The great and important question, which it is the duty of the writer to urge, and the interest of the reader to ponder, is this, Do I know experimentally anything of the love of the Spirit ? It is a question involving present enjoyment of the highest order, and all the hopes and prospects of the future. And the

enlightened and scriptural conviction, that the love of the Spirit has been realised in its renewing power, and is felt in the present growth of spiritual principle, will produce a more accurate and enlarged view of this delightful theme, that can be expected from the vigorous intellect, or the diligent research, unaided by a heart, whose best emotions are illustrations of the truth considered. In bringing this subject to a conclusion, it may be desirable to notice,

The influence “the love of the Spirit” should exert on the mind of the believer. It is presented by the apostle as a powerful motive to induce the recent converts to Christianity, to *prayer, unity, and exertion* for the grand object to which the apostle was devoted. And there is considerable propriety and beauty in this appeal. *Prayer* had recently been produced in their hearts,—the enjoyment of their change was yet glowing in all its freshness,—the blessings of genuine piety had imparted their genial influence,—the scriptural hopes of ultimate bliss were called into exercise,—all these were traceable to the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit; it was, therefore, exceedingly appropriate that an appeal to them for more frequent and more fervent prayer should be founded on the love of the Spirit. As though the apostle had said, “Ye know how great has been the love of the Spirit towards you, in turning some of you from dumb idols to the living God,—

and in turning others of you from a most fallacious and ruinous reliance on a system which was never intended to be the substance, but only the sign and shadow of a sinner's hope ; and now that ye have been brought away from broken cisterns to the fountain of living waters, and been taught to commune with this fountain, I beseech you, by the love of the Spirit already displayed, that ye give full proof that ye appreciate the grace bestowed,—that ye improve the privilege conferred,—and that ye recognise the connexion of prayer with the triumphs of the Gospel, by more constant, more fervent, and importunate supplications.” And this appeal would meet with a most cordial response from every renewed heart. He who most feels his obligations to the Spirit as the teacher of prayer,—as the intercessor within, will be most concerned that others, who have never prayed, may be brought under the same gracious influence, and for this purpose will make frequent visits to the mercy-seat,—and maintain a holy importunity until some signs of the desired blessings appear. What, indeed, can more fully show our love to the Spirit for his love to us, than a constant exercise and delight in the graces he imparts? The man who properly appreciates the love of the Spirit in teaching him to pray, will look upon prayer not as an occasional exercise, but as the very element in which his soul lives.

Unity is another effect which a consideration of the love of the Spirit will produce. And here again the thought recurs, that this appeal was exceedingly appropriate. They whom the apostle addressed in the words at the head of this section, were men who had recently felt the power of the Spirit in producing a reconciliation between themselves and God,—were then filled with wonder and gratitude at the great propitiation, by which God in Christ was reconciled to the world, and by which he was reconciling the world unto himself,—were then enjoying the gracious and exalted pleasure of communion with God, and fellowship with Christ,—they were living in hallowed union with the blessed Trinity, and rejoicing in the stability of their union. They had also been brought to feel a closer bond of union with their fellow-men. The broad and hitherto impassable barrier, which had existed between Jew and Gentile, had now been taken out of the way, and they saw in the Gospel, the means which broke “down this middle wall of partition, and made both one.” Allured to the mercy-seat by the Spirit, reconciled by the blood of Christ,—and united in love to all that love Christ, they would rejoice and say as the apostle did to the Ephesians, “Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” These were considerations which would powerfully influence the minds of the early converts to Christianity to be of one heart and

one mind, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. But whatever considerations might influence the minds of believers to the maintenance of unity in the times and spheres of apostolic ministration, should be of equal weight in the present day,—yea, the very times in which we live, furnish additional reasons to all Christians,—to all debtors to the love of the Spirit, to maintain union,—to present to the unbelieving and scoffing world, one band of holy brotherhood, reciprocating all the kind offices of sincere love,—one mighty compact phalanx arrayed against SIN, as the foe of God and man. Let there be unity where there cannot be uniformity. And can there not be unity in prayer ; that exercise which brings the children of the same family, to the footstool of the same Father ? Oh that there were more of this unity exemplified by believers ! it would demonstrate the sincerity of their piety, and convince an infidel world of the heavenly origin of the doctrines they believed. “ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, when ye have love one to another,” was Christ’s declaration ; and “ That they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me ;” this was his prayer. Oh that all could feel more powerfully their obligations to the love of the Spirit, and then gratitude and love would bind all in

closer bonds to the Spirit, as a common centre, and all would realise the firmness of their union to each other!

Exertion,—zealous, vigorous, and enlightened exertion, will be another effect produced by a deep sense of the love of the Spirit. And for this, it should be frequently considered, and habitually recognised. For while every Christian must acknowledge, that the renewal of the heart is the special work of the Holy Spirit, yet it must never be forgotten, that there is an instrumentality the Spirit ordinarily employs,—an instrumentality in which human agency is honoured with a place. The word of truth is mighty in the hands of the Spirit; but that word is to be circulated and proclaimed by men. This precious treasure is put in earthen vessels,—entrusted to men. And who so suited to exhibit it to others, as they who have participated in its benefits,—as they who experienced his enlightening and convincing power,—as they who are living evidences of the love of the Spirit? The apostle Paul asks for a vigorous union with him in prayer for the object dearest to his heart, and to which his life was devoted. The man who sincerely prays, “Thy kingdom come,” will not be an inactive spectator of events and circumstances; but will put his time, his wealth, his influence, his every talent, in active operation, to accelerate the event for which he prays. This arises from the very nature of prayer. Prayer is the

ascendent wish, the ardent desire of the soul. The conduct of a man is the best index to his prayers. The object at which a man incessantly aims,—to which all his thinkings and doings are directed, is the object of his prayers. Prayer is the pulse of mental existence. And though men may neither speak nor write their prayers, yet observation hears and reads them. Let every Christian,—every debtor to the love of the Spirit, solemnly put these inquiries, What are the paramount desires of my heart? Are they those which become my obligations and my profession? If life is one continued striving, after what am I striving? and wherein do I show that the end for which I live differs from that of the man of the world, whose only portion is in this life? May God enable you to dispose of these questions faithfully! May the love of Christ and the love of the Spirit constrain you to manifest an enlightened zeal, to present liberal offerings, and to maintain a persevering activity for the extension of Christ's kingdom and the promotion of his glory!

SECTION VIII.

ON GRIEVING THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

“ Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.”

PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS.

GRIEF is the effect of wounded affection,—the effect of discovered, but undeserved unkindness,—it is the pang, the fond mother feels, when she first learns, that the child of her fervent prayers and cherished hopes, has become profane and profligate. It is the throbbing emotion of the generous heart, when thwarted or interrupted in the benevolent design it has conceived. And can it be that man should thus grieve God? Is it possible that they whom the Spirit has renewed and adopted into the family of God, that they should wound their best benefactor,—the author of their present peace and consolation,—the originator of their hope of eternal happiness? Would, for the honour of our nature, and the glory of God, that these inquiries could be met by a well-sustained negative! But the contrary to this is the case,—the records of truth

answer these inquiries in the affirmative in the most solemn and affecting manner. At one time, heaven and earth are called on to witness the declaration of the painful fact, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Is not this the language of a parent expressing his grief over the conduct of his children? And since God has condescended to reveal himself in relations involving the exercise of strong and constant affection, it becomes us to receive with humility and gratitude the *truths* thus conveyed, without rashly concluding that God is altogether such an one as ourselves.

At another time, when God's mercies, loving-kindnesses, and sympathy towards his ancient people had been recited,—the prophet, under the guidance of inspiration, writes, "But they rebelled, and *vexed* his Holy Spirit." Other illustrations show us the Spirit grieved, and that by the people, who were most conspicuous among all the nations of the earth, the selected and honoured recipients of his special blessings. The nearer the relation, the keener the grief. The man that can feel grief for his neighbour's delinquency, feels it more keenly when discovered in his friend, and more keenly still, when his own child is the guilty one. The Gospel brings man into closer relationship with God, and confers on man blessings involving the

weightiest motives to love and devotedness to God. Yet, even with these claims to man's constancy and obedience, he often grieves the Holy Spirit by whom he is sealed, brings sorrow and darkness in his soul, and damages the cause of truth to which he is avowedly attached. It was even so among the early Christian churches. The church at Thessalonica was addressed in the language of caution,—“Quench not the Spirit;” and the church at Ephesus was addressed in the language of warning,—“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Warning implies the existence of danger. It is wise and kind to sound the alarm while escape is practicable, but it is still wiser, and manifests greater affection, *to prevent* that position of affairs, in which danger is involved. The warning addressed to the Ephesian church performed that friendly office, and brought the influence of a powerful motive to interpose between them and the seductions that would allure, and the temptations that would ensnare. When some calamity has followed sin, remorse has sometimes induced the sinner to wish he had averted the misery he has incurred, and most gladly has he accepted the slightest *mitigation* to his woe; but infinitely more valuable would have been the decided and faithful admonition, that would have kept back the man from the sin and the consequences which followed. There

is no sin which does not bring forth some sorrow. And the sin of grieving the Holy Spirit, must be attended with gloom, depression, and disquietude too intense to be described. Let the axe be laid to the root of the tree, and the apples of Sodom it was wont to produce shall be no more seen. Let the cause be prevented, and the effects will not appear. It may be profitable to inquire,

What is the evil to be avoided?—grieving the Holy Spirit of God. Grief is a relative emotion, and cannot be supposed to have any existence in the Divine mind ; but in his relation to us. In considering this subject, it is necessary that the Spirit himself should impress our minds and affect our hearts with correct views of the dignity of his nature,—the tenderness of his love,—the work he has accomplished,—the kind and appropriate offices he sustains,—the constancy of our dependence upon him, and the free and full promises of his word, to bless us with the richest consolation. The Holy Spirit is grieved,

I. *By the exhibition of unhallowed tempers.* Many who seem morally incapable of committing theft, murder, or adultery, do sometimes manifest tempers not less derogatory to the Divine glory and scarcely less injurious to society. And that this is one way in which the Spirit is grieved, will appear from the exhortation, “ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger,

and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Nothing can more clearly show how the Spirit is sometimes grieved, than the two verses now quoted. And yet it is painful to witness, the awful delusion of very many, who bearing the Christian name,—and indulging in the *worst tempers* of our nature, maintain a pharisaical complacency as to their own moral state, and a positive certainty as to their interest in the covenant of grace. If at any time they are kindly reproofed by the judicious friend and the faithful pastor,—if they are told, that the tempers they manifest are inconsistent with the profession they make,—injurious in their influence,—offensive to the Spirit, and furnish strong evidence to unsettle the conclusion at which they have arrived, that they are the children of God,—instead of being humbled at the discovery of inconsistencies, which grieve the Spirit, and wound the Saviour in the house of his friends, they, in many instances at least, meet the reproof with an air of self-confidence, approaching to boasting, while they use the cant phrase, "Grace is often grafted on a crab-stock." This cant phrase, is meant to justify the existence and exercise of *crabbed* tempers, and demon-like passions in connexion with a profession of godliness and a saintly appearance. And for this purpose, it is

as unsound in philosophy as it is profane in theology, The fruit is always the same as the graft, and never as the stock ; it is therefore unsound in philosophy. The fruits of grace are the fruits of the Spirit,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance ; it is therefore the height of profanity to ascribe to grace the ungenerous, the unforgiving, the slanderous,—the malignant tempers, which are sometimes displayed by those who bear the Christian name. The Spirit is grieved when any whom he has renewed, are overtaken by temptation and betrayed into the manifestation of tempers, which they deeply deplore, and strive and labour to mortify ; nor is the Spirit less grieved when he witnesses depravity assuming its monstrous form, and daring to take the hallowed ephod to clothe a heart filled with the vilest passions sin has ever engendered,—assuming the emblem of consecration to conceal deep-rooted enmity, —and putting the insignia of holiness on the temple of Satan. Many souls are deluded and ruined, because they will not submit to the simple test, “ The tree is known by its fruit.” Oh that all who have grieved the Spirit by the indulgence of unhallowed tempers would fall down with deep self-abasement before the cross, and implore forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and purification by the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit ! It is not uncommon to find those morose,

querulous, and selfish tempers, so offensive to man as well as to the Spirit, in connexion with an indomitable obstinacy,—a relentless impenitence.

II. The Spirit is grieved *when a levity in reference to sacred truths and sacred things is manifested*. The human mind is ever prone to extremes. At one time it displays a superstitious veneration to sacred things, approaching to idolatry,—paying the devotion to the means of worship, which is due only to the object, and at another time exhibiting a profane contempt of all sacred things,—insulting the Deity by defiling his temple. Nor is it uncommon to find these extremes co-existing in the same individual. The man who, with the utmost degree of superstition, will observe some religious rites on the morning of the Lord's-day, will be found spending the closing hours of the same day in profaneness and dissipation ; like the Pharisees of old, who were superstitious even to the tithing of mint and cummin, and yet were neglectful of the weightier matters of the law. That there is a veneration due to sacred things, appears evident from the instructions the Holy Spirit has recorded. At one time the caution is given, "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." At another time, the tragic scene is presented of two young men, sons of Jehovah's first chosen high priest on earth,—smitten dead for profaning the temple ;

Korah and his companions are miraculously destroyed for their profane daring ;—Uzzah is smitten for touching the ark, and other facts make up the scene which enforces the truth, “ I am the Lord, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” And if these facts, may not be clearly understood to set forth in a most impressive manner, the truth, that indifference to sacred things is offensive to the Spirit,—a plain and solemn caution is given, “ Keep thy foot”—a Hebraism for, Take heed to thy conduct—“when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools.” In the catalogue of offences confessed and lamented, is the sin of trifling with the service of God, or the roaming of the imagination and affections while in the holy assembly, “ I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.” But in no fact, by no caution, by no confession, is veneration for the house of God, and Divine ordinances, more powerfully enforced, than by the conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ. When did sternness clothe his brow ? When did chiding glow on his lips ? When did a weapon fill his hand ? When did anger burn in his heart ? Never : but when he burned with holy zeal for his Father’s honour. Then he took a whip of small cords, and drove out the traffickers from the temple, and said, “ It is written, ‘ My house shall be called a house of

prayer,' but ye have made it a den of thieves." It was then the Scripture was fulfilled, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And it is evident from the very nature of the case, that this zeal would not have had an existence, unless the object had been a legitimate one. What was offensive to the Lord Jesus Christ,—to God incarnate, must also be offensive to the Holy Spirit,—God invisible. While both evils, that of superstition on the one hand, and that of profanity on the other, are to be deprecated, yet the danger of falling into the latter appears to be very great, even among many, whose early education, and subsequent associations would seem to provide ample protection; "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall," is an admonition, which cannot be too frequently influential on the thoughts of the heart. Many of our sins arise from a want of watchfulness. Many persons who would not grieve an earthly friend by neglecting or dishonouring his house, often grieve the Spirit by their conduct towards the sanctuary of the Most High.

No doubt the Spirit is often grieved by the levity with which *his word* is treated. This is the rock against which multitudes split, and sink to rise no more. This is most frequently the unperceived, but incipient step in apostacy. This levity,—this trifling with the word of God, is practised and indulged, never viewed as offensive to the Spirit, and consequently is

never regarded as an occasion for repentance. Some will even dispute the question, and maintain the very plausible, but fallacious sentiment, that "words are only the media of ideas, and that therefore there can be no harm in conveying our ideas in the same words, which the Spirit has employed." This entirely evades the question at issue; the premises are correct, but the conclusion is erroneous. The question turns upon the moral relation in which the Spirit stands to us, and the state of feeling and design with which his word is quoted. Imagine that an absent father had addressed a letter to his children,—a letter containing expressions of his fondest affection,—promises to relieve future anxiety,—warnings against known danger,—exhortations and encouragements to higher attainments to moral excellence; and that at a period subsequent to the receipt of the letter, when his children are gathered together for the purpose of merriment, he is present, but unobserved, and he hears some passages from his memorable letter, which he had written under the most solemn and anxious feeling for their welfare, quoted with ridicule, and a meaning appropriated to his words, which he never contemplated. Could he be the hearer of such conversation, and not be grieved? Thus has the Spirit dictated the volume of inspiration, as an epistle of his love, the letter from our Father's heart and our Father's home, and when portions of that

letter are wantonly appropriated to the purposes of merriment and ridicule, then is the Spirit, who ever takes cognisance of the state of mind, grieved. That the infidel should take the holy words of the Spirit to flavour his wit,—to point his jest, and to make his pun, is not surprising; but that men professing godliness should indulge in a similar practice, is an occasion for wonder, shame, and humility. The ministers of religion,—the dispensers of the truth, are the men who might be expected, because of their sacred character and solemn engagements, would be entirely exempt from treating lightly sacred things, and especially free from using irreverently the holy word which they preach to others. It is an occasion for thankfulness that this expectation is to a great extent realised; and that many are in the moral position to reprove with effect, the scoffer and the infidel. Oh, that it were universally so! But alas! there are to be found men who wear the insignia of ministers of Christ, who give scarcely any other evidence that they *know* the Scriptures, than that which is to be found in their jokes, their gibes, and their puns. If it be asked, How is it, that this is the case? the mildest answer which can be given is, They possess a strong liking for the wit, which they *cannot* command; and being entirely incompetent to the production of a real *bon mot*,—they frequently indulge their favourite passion, by appropriating a passage of

holy writ, to a purpose remote from its design, and thus by their profanity, gain a laugh from the ignorant and the thoughtless,—the highest reward their ambition desired. That the Spirit is grieved with the men, who practise this levity, no enlightened mind can doubt. And that the immediate consequences of this practice are a diminution of spiritual enjoyment, and a curtailment of moral influence, will soon be painfully evident to every observer. But who can calculate on the remote consequences? Eternity alone can disclose the extent of mischief, which will be the result of the frivolity and levity, which have exerted their baneful influence on the thinking, and on the practice of the youth within the circle in which this trifling with holy writ has been witnessed. Thoughts and deeds, as well as men, are immortal. What humility, what deep and bitter repenting, ought the discovery of this levity to call forth;—because the Spirit has been grieved, and souls injured, if not ruined! The levity which has been considered, belongs to those “*corrupt communications*,” against which the Spirit has recorded his solemn caution, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers; and *grieve* not the Holy Spirit.”

III. The Spirit is grieved, *by a negligence of those means which are calculated to facilitate his work.* Those

means are numerous and varied. The word of truth is that means on which the Spirit puts more abundant honour. It is in one view,—the instrument in the hands of the Spirit in the production of new life; and in another view,—it is the aliment of the soul,—the heavenly manna,—the daily sustenance of the new man. “For it is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’” The Israelites were required to gather the manna, and the believer is expected to read and ponder the word of truth, that it may nourish and invigorate the soul. The spiritual health may be generally known by the measure of attachment and devout knowledge of the sacred word. The men most distinguished for their eminent piety, and the salutary tendency of their moral influence, are the men whose practice is to “delight in the law of the Lord; and in his law to meditate day and night.” The apostle Paul, who was ever anxious for the good of souls, and especially for the spiritual welfare of the individuals and communities gathered to Christ by his instrumentality, recognised the importance of a large acquaintance with the word of truth, when he exhorted the Colossians, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” Compliance with this exhortation constituted the ground of their consistent deportment, and the pledge of their usefulness. The same regard to the word is implied in the exhortation

to the Philippians, to “shine as lights^a in the world, holding forth the word of life.” And how were they to be lights in the world, but by being filled with all wisdom and knowledge, as they kept their minds in contact and communication with the fountain of all light? A greater than the apostle, even the Lord Jesus, has most plainly taught, that the word is the means, in the hands of his Spirit, of sanctifying his people,—“Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” Since the word is the means in the hands of the Spirit, for accomplishing that work of which regeneration is the beginning and the pledge,—even the complete sanctification of the soul; it is not only a solemn duty to keep close to *the word of God*, and to avail ourselves of all facilities to understand its meaning, to retain its sentiments in our hearts and memory, and to exhibit its influence on our deportment; but we imagine, we cannot wantonly neglect these means and opportunities without retarding the work of sanctification, and grieving the Spirit, and bringing dearth and gloom on our own spirits.

When man by sin put out the light that was within

^a The word translated lights is the same as that used by the Septuagint in Gen. i. 6, as the name given to the sun and moon; and selected by the apostle probably to express the purity of their light,—the extensiveness of their influence,—and the constancy of their shining.

him, the Spirit resolved, "I will guide him, and instruct him." And from the time that the first ray of revelation reached this benighted earth, the apparatus for the enlightenment and sanctification of the world has continued to receive augmentation up to the present period. Century after century rolled away, and priests and patriarchs were inspired, and truths conveyed to them were written in laws, or embodied in types. Urim and Thummim, and signs in heaven and signs on earth, were the means of conveying the mind of the Spirit. Amidst all the national vicissitudes of Israel's tribes, whether exulting in liberty in all their glory on the plains of Judæa, or groaning in bondage,—clothed in sackcloth and weeping by the streams of Babylon,—the prophet, the holy seer, the psalmist, and the saint were called to see the vision, or hear the voice of God, and were commanded to make known the heavenly communication to men. And though for a season the Divine oracle was silent, yet after the jargon, the discordant and ambiguous dogmas of pagan oracles had perplexed, where they pretended to guide, and had deceived, where they had obtained confidence ; when the Jews, to whom the oracles of God were entrusted, had obscured their glory, and distorted their meaning by the traditions of the fathers,—then God spake unto the world by his Son, who, in opening his commission to man, proclaimed himself THE TRUTH,—being at once the centre,

in which all the truths, that had ever been revealed to man converged and glowed; and also the source, from which all future revelations were to emanate. Evangelists and apostles were the recipients of inspiration,—lights revolving around the Sun of Righteousness, deriving their brightness and motion from him. By all these divers means and sundry manners, God the Spirit was preparing that word, which we possess until the vision and the prophecy were sealed. And he has continued to superintend this transcript of his own mind, until now,—it speaks in almost all the languages of the earth, it touches and gladdens every shore. Can any one survey the ages that have passed, through which the work of revelation was continued, the numerous and diversified means of conveying truth to men,—the number of minds which the Spirit employed,—the ultimate result in the completion of the sacred volume,—and the Divine superintendence in preserving it incorrupt,—and in conveying it to us in our native language, without being impressed that the Bible is a *precious boon*, and that *neglect of it*, must be highly offensive to that Spirit whose grace designed it for our present and eternal welfare? Must not the Spirit be grieved, when he witnesses a mental activity, that delights to hold communion with the intellectual living, and with the mighty dead, but displays a constant reluctance to hold communion with him? And though the truth implied

in these queries is admitted, are there not many whose consciences must testify against them? Are there not many who admit that the Bible contains the *mind* of the Spirit,—the thinkings of the Eternal,—and who have meditated on these thinkings till enraptured by the exercise they have exclaimed, “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them!” and yet with all this evidence of enjoyment from this source, their Bibles tell of neglect and indifference? Could some Bibles speak, they would say to some in affliction, “I would have given you consolation to lay up against the day of adversity, but ye refused; now I will be as a spring dried up, ye shall seek for peace, but ye shall find none.”

There are some men, who have spirits too generous, and hearts too kind, to grieve an earthly friend as they grieve the Spirit of God. Did they receive a letter from an absent friend, they would promptly break the seal, carefully examine every sentence, ponder over the thoughts it contained, nor would the length of the epistle, nor the demands on their time from various directions, cause them to desist, until the point and meaning of the whole letter were comprehended. Were they accused of having in their possession the unread letter of an absent friend, the flush of indignation would crimson the cheek, while they repelled the charge so repugnant to their best and noblest feelings. But, if

after all this avowal of a high sense of honour and gratitude, the absent friend, that wrote the letter arrived, and found, that notwithstanding his uniform affection, and the kindly sentiments he had embodied in his epistle, that epistle remained, if not still sealed, at least unread, would not the friend have just occasion for grief,—yea, generous grief, that the individual, for whose happiness he had made the most ample provision, remained wretched and miserable, just because he would not avail himself of the means by which happiness, might be made his own? Many Christians carry about with them a saddened heart and a gloomy countenance, because they are destitute of that fresh and full knowledge of the word, which would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, and because the Spirit is dishonoured and grieved, and his smile withdrawn.

Similar thoughts may be applied to the ministry of the word, and the ordinances of the Lord's house, which some neglect. And though a blessing is promised to those who wait upon the Lord, and the truth of that promise is neither questioned nor doubted, yet are these means, in many instances slighted and neglected, for the most frivolous reasons, which can influence the conduct of any man, making pretensions to intelligence and piety. An invitation to tea, an unexpected visit from a friend, a slight indisposition, that does not unfit for social intercourse,—the claims of business, or some

scene affording a momentary gratification, is deemed a sufficient reason for neglecting the service of the sanctuary. Weight to the excuse is supposed to be given from the depreciating view entertained of the service, and the apology for neglect concludes with the emphatic observation, "*It is only a prayer meeting.*" *Only a prayer meeting!* What is a prayer meeting? A meeting, in point of grandeur and importance, which far exceeds a meeting of all the crowned heads in the world, to negotiate the affairs of all the kingdoms of the earth. A prayer meeting is the King of kings meeting a company of his dependent, but intelligent and sinful creatures to ratify to them important engagements, to hear petitions, to fulfil his promises, and to transact with immortal souls, business relating to eternity. There is a necessity to urge the exhortation of the apostle, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."^a And this exhortation immediately precedes the affecting description of an apostate. It stands like a lighthouse, pointing out the rock,—the cause which has proved the ruin of many. Could Christ again become incarnate, and in person reprove those who neglect the seasons for prayer, no language could describe the expression of his eye, and the tone of his voice, while he said, What! could ye not

^a Heb. x. 25.

watch with me one hour? What! are the claims of friendship so dear, considerations of health so weighty,—pursuits of the world so important,—personal gratifications so precious, that you cannot spare from these *one hour* for me, who purchased you with my blood,—for me, to whom you have a thousand times confessed that you owe all that you have, and all that you are,—for me, to whom when I asked your heart, you replied, “Had I a thousand hearts to give, dear Lord, they all should be thine?”

Dear reader, if you would grow in grace and in knowledge, if you would have spiritual health and prosperity,—if you would possess the highest degree of enjoyment to be known on this side heaven,—if you would be proof against the tempter’s subtlety and power,—if you would be prepared with strong consolation against the time of affliction, and the hour of death,—avail yourself of all the means in your power, for living near to God. Seek closer communion with him in his word, in his house, and at the mercy-seat. Live in the atmosphere of Calvary. And then, if in the arrangements of providence, you shall week after week, be unfitted to read or hear the word of God, and unavailingly sigh, “As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary,” you shall then enjoy the sweetness of

the Divine word applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit, and feel a mitigation to your sufferings while The Comforter “takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to you.” And instead of mourning an absent God,—and suffering from indications, that the Spirit is grieved, you will have your “*songs in the night.*”

In secret silence of the mind
My God, and there my heaven I find.

IV. *The Spirit is grieved, when spiritual improvement bears no proportion to the facilities afforded.* The life produced by the Spirit in the soul of the believer, is progressive. And though it is surrounded by elements and influences inimical to its existence, and opposed to its developement, yet the Spirit has amply provided against these difficulties, and afforded abundant facilities for the growth and maturity of the Christian character. Among those facilities, the word, the ministry, access to God, and the promised influences of the Spirit occupy a prominent place. It is an axiom in the dispensation of the Spirit, as it is in the government of God generally, “To whom much is given, from them much is expected.” When God looked upon the ancient Israelites, to whom he had given his law, his prophets, priests, and ordinances, and for whose discipline and moral improvement the events of Providence were adminis-

tered, Jehovah gives utterance to language, which, after the manner of men, is expressive of disappointment and grief, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" With considerable force may similar language be applied to many Christians, whose early education, and subsequent condition in life, have been peculiarly favourable to the growth of piety, and the maturity of Christian principle, and yet with the age of men, they have the stature and feebleness of babyhood. They still need to be fed with milk, and not with meat, because they are not able to bear it. And the Spirit expresses himself in the language of grief, when those who have possessed facilities for improvement and progress in the Divine life, have yet retrograded when they should have advanced. Such a feeling is embodied in the address to the Galatians, "Ye did run well, who hath hindered," or driven you back, "that ye should not obey the truth?" Although it is not very clear how many years elapsed from the formation of that church, in which the largest number of Jews professing Christianity, were embodied, and the writing of the epistle to the Hebrews, yet it is evident, that the time had been sufficiently long for those converts to have given full developement to the doctrines and principles of Christianity, and to have

presented a maturity and energy of intelligence and devotedness, that should have been instructing to all by whom they were surrounded. But instead of this, they merited the reproof, "That 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."

The addresses to the seven churches contain the thoughts of the triune God, concerning the spiritual condition of those churches. And in some of those addresses, there are sentiments expressed, which began in grief, and at length arose to anger. Of this class are those to the church at Ephesus, and at Pergamos, and Laodicea. The Spirit had been grieved, and he reproved, exhorted, and threatened. Nor is the Spirit less watchful over his churches now, nor less interested in their spiritual progress. The character of a church in its aggregate capacity, must necessarily be the result of the character of individuals who are its constituent parts. And so diffusive and powerful is moral influence, that a distinctive character is given to a church from the assimilating effect of constant association. This is very clearly illustrated and confirmed, by the provincial churches in our own country, where the members have more frequent and more social intercourse than they can have in the metropolitan churches.

A few cold lethargic professors, occupying stations of influence, if they do not freeze and lull the whole body, and *paralyse* the exertions of the pastor, yet they so frequently thwart the benevolent designs that are formed, and damp the ardour of zeal that is displayed, that the pastor is discouraged, and the young desert the region of coldness and sloth, for one more congenial with the warmth of their first love to Christ, and compassion for immortal souls. Discouragement produced again and again from the quarter whence co-operation should have been certain, induces depression, languor, and ultimately, inactivity. But on the contrary, a few holy, warm-hearted, and enterprising Christians, will create and attract similar spirits to themselves; they become the heart of the church, and give an impulse which thrills to its utmost extremities. The man who fills the solemn office of Christian minister, may determine the character of the church, if he undertake its superintendence from the formation; but the church of long standing frequently forms after its own image, and determines the character of the young pastor. But to return from this digression, though it was designedly intended to exhibit an additional motive for individual improvement arising from the beneficial influence, which a healthy state of piety may exert, and to show, that association with those of exemplary devotion and zeal, is itself a means of spiritual improvement involving no

small degree of responsibility. When the Spirit has immediately surrounded us with some of the finest productions of his grace,—as illustrations of his love, power, and faithfulness, he is grieved, that we should observe them with indifference, and come into contact with them without improvement. Daily self-examination when rightly conducted, will ever have reference to this question, What spiritual improvement is going on in my soul? Am I honouring the Spirit by a growing delight in the things of God,—by a gradual assimilation to the image of Christ, by a holy zeal and diligence,—by more ardent love and gratitude to Christ? or am I grieving the Spirit by slighting the truth and house of God, by conformity to the world, and by the coldness and negligence of a wicked and slothful servant? Through a neglect of this kind of faithful self-inspection, Satan often gets an advantage over us. A frequent investigation of our spiritual state, conducted under the consciousness of the presence of a heart-searching God, must detect the backsliding of the heart in its incipient stage, and induce a prompt application to the only means of recovery. Humiliating and painful as may be the discoveries, which such an investigation would disclose, it seems to be a process absolutely necessary, to prevent grieving the Spirit by growing hardness of heart, and to honour him by seeking his quickening grace, that each may record his

own experience, in the language of the psalmist, "He restoreth my soul." Only a slight acquaintance with the human heart, shows its proneness to depart from the living God,—confirms the truth, that "he that trusts to his own heart is a fool," and urges the necessity of a more tenacious clinging to the Spirit, crying, "Hold thou me up in thy goings, that my footsteps slide not." Dear reader, if you would deprecate offending and grieving the best friend,—if you would avert the gloom and sadness arising from the withdrawal of the Spirit's cheering testimony, and comforting consolations,—if you would not prepare for yourself a wounded spirit, to embitter your grief in the time of affliction,—if you would not plant thorns in your pillow for the hour of death, shrink not from a most scrutinising examination of your heart, and its position towards God,—be it now your first concern to spare no sin whereby you have grieved the Spirit; but deeply repent, beseech the forgiving love of the Spirit to return his gracious influences to you, with melted heart look again to him whom you have pierced, and before the cross be in bitterness for your sins. If you cannot approach the mercy-seat under the influence of adoption, go as a prodigal,—if not as a prodigal, go as a stranger, as a guilty sinner, the first time imploring pardon, and he, the God who delights to pardon, will receive you graciously, and love you freely.

If you have realised the renewing power of the Spirit, and you would, that your path should be as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day; would you, that you should become more and more extensively a blessing in the influence you exert; would you, that your enjoyment should be the purest and highest that can be known on earth, then strive to maintain a constant communion with the Spirit, and daily seek after growing conformity to the image of Christ; and instead of grieving the Spirit, you shall know in your own happy experience the fulfilment of the promise, "The Lord thy God will save, he will rejoice over his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

SECTION IX.

ON THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“ There is a sin unto death.”

1 EPIST. JOHN.

WHAT is the unpardonable sin ? is a question which has overwhelmed many ingenuous Christians with depression, and occasioned many eminent divines much perplexity. The importance of the subject,—the consequences it involves, and other considerations, constrain the writer to approach the subject with diffidence, and to submit his thoughts with deference to other minds, whose views and opinions on it have been previously published. Had he consulted only his own feelings, this section would have been entirely omitted. But it necessarily became a part of his plan, according to a previous arrangement, on which the whole of this volume is constructed. His attention has been given to the subject, from the application of anxious inquirers, and numerous and impressive facts which have come

under his own immediate notice, in the circumstances, in which at different times he has been placed.

Self-deception, is the dread of every sincere mind : to avoid it on all occasions, is the object of constant anxiety and vigilance. Legitimate and commendable as that anxiety and vigilance may be, when regulated by a scripturally enlightened judgment, yet not unfrequently it will be found, that a very defective acquaintance with the word of God,—the inherent suggestions of unbelief, combine with the temptations of Satan and a constitutional tendency to gloom,—and exert an injurious influence on the ingenuous mind to restrain the exercise of a scriptural hope, and to engender a feeling approaching to despondency. There are many persons of this class in most of our congregations and churches. The more important the interest involved in the question at issue, the more intense will be their feelings. Upon no subject is religious depression more frequently manifested, than on that which is now to engage our attention. Numerous are the instances of persons who erroneously think, that they have committed the unpardonable sin. Intense thought, and distressed feeling, have affected their health,—a reaction has taken place,—and impaired health, associated with a hereditary tendency to gloom, unfit the mind for close, calm investigation, and cheering views on any subject. A confirmed melancholy, a deep dejection

seem to have settled upon them. With many, reasoning and argument are unavailing. And if ever they are recovered to a state of cheerfulness and spiritual enjoyment, it must be by some skilful medical treatment to remedy the health ;—and by the Spirit of God exerting a direct influence on the heart, so that a comprehensive view of Divine truth may be clearly apprehended and firmly embraced. Oh, that that Spirit may condescend to bless the following thoughts to instruct some, that they may avoid the causes of painful depression, and to direct others to internal evidence of their interest in the blessings of the new covenant, and emancipate them from the bondage, in which they have been held.

“To the law and to the testimony,” is a safe maxim to suggest and regulate the thoughts upon every subject, on which God has deigned to impart instruction. Our first object will be *to take a calm review of all those portions of sacred writ, which are usually admitted to relate to the subject under consideration.* And *Secondly, To point out the peculiar characteristics of this sin.* And, *Thirdly, To notice some of the reasons why it is unpardonable.*

First, in taking a view of the Divine testimony, it may appear somewhat remarkable, that the Old Testament should be silent on this topic, and that the New Testament, which is a clearer revelation of *love and mercy*, should make known a sin, which excludes the

possibility of pardon. The first intimation of this sin, we hear from the lips of Christ. He who was meek and lowly of heart,—he who would not break the reeds, though bruised, nor put out the flax, though only smoking,—he who was an incarnation of mercy, and in whose threatenings and solemn warnings, there was more love than in all the smiles and promises of men. He, the dispenser of pardons has said, “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”^a This forms a striking contrast to the sentiments Christ was accustomed to announce.

The apostle addressing the Hebrews, in the most solemn manner minutely describes the peculiarities of this sin, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to them-

^a Matt. xii. 31, 32.

selves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”^a As though the Spirit of God would impress the minds of the Hebrews that the subject was one of vital and deep importance, he again instructs the apostle to write, “For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”^b Upon the same solemn theme, the Spirit instructs the apostle Peter to write, “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is

^a Heb. vi. 4—6.

^b Heb. x. 26—29.

turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”^a The human mind can scarcely imagine a more affecting view, or language supply stronger terms, than the view and the terms recorded by the apostle John, “If any see his brother sin, a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. *There is a sin unto death*; I do not say that he shall pray for it.”^b

Thus has God the Holy Spirit given line upon line and precept upon precept, minutely to describe a most fearful evil, and to proclaim a solemn warning against its commission. And the first intimation of the possibility of this sin, is given in connexion with the most extraordinary conduct of the Pharisees, who having all the evidences of Christ’s Messiahship before them, as clearly as if written with the noon-day beam, chose deliberately and determinately to do violence to the convictions of their conscience, to resist the Spirit of all light and intelligence, and to pervert the brightest evidence of Christ’s Deity,—the independent power of working miracles, into an accusation of demoniacal possession. Some writers have thought that this sin could be committed only during the time, in which the church possessed miraculous influences of the Holy

^a 2 Pet. ii. 20—22.

^b 1 John v. 16.

Spirit. If this opinion be a correct one, every difficulty under which a tender conscience may labour, in reference to this momentous question, would be satisfactorily removed. But though it is impossible that the same sin can be committed, with all the peculiar and aggravating circumstances, as those which attended its first exposure, yet to admit the absolute impossibility of the sin, would be a reflection on the wisdom and grace of the Spirit, by whose inspiration the foregoing solemn and cautionary passages were written. Circumstances are the mere appendages of sin, sometimes hiding its deformity, and sometimes exposing its hideousness. Sin itself is in the mind's hostility to God. And the very same attitude of aversion and resistance, the minds of the Pharisees presented in the days of Christ's earthly sojourn, the Spirit foresaw would be assumed and maintained by some at a subsequent period. And the sin, against which we are warned, is doubtlessly one of monstrous malignity of heart, exhibiting itself in all its unveiled ugliness. A sin, of which we have no intimation in the Old Testament, because it was not till that dispensation had passed away, and God was manifested in the flesh, with evidences of the highest order, that it could be shown to men and angels, what was the utmost degree of enmity and unbelief the human heart could contain. Then depravity produced a wilful

blindness,—aimed its poisoned darts at God incarnate, defied and resisted the Spirit of light and truth, and accused the pure and holy Jesus of alliance with the kingdom of darkness and sin. All this was done by men, to whom the oracles of God were entrusted,—by men whose privileges were the greatest, and whose professions of knowledge and piety were inscribed on the borders of their garments. Yet these are the men, who commit a sin so flagrant in its nature, as to draw forth from the lips of him, who delights in pardon, the sentence that at once withers all their present and future hopes of pardon.^a The hope they entertained of the efficacy of expiation, as to the removal of part of the guilt of blasphemy, is by the declaration of Christ entirely cut off. The scene of an approaching eternity shall have no bleeding victim, no sacrifice of sufficient efficacy to reach guilt so monstrous. “There re-

^a Christ here sweeps away the tradition held by the Jews, “that some sins which were not forgiven in this world, were forgiven in the world to come.” And this they held as specially applicable to the sin of blasphemy; the Babylonian Gemara thus expresses it, “He by whom the name of God is blasphemed, repentance is of no avail to him to suspend judgment, nor the day of expiation to expiate it, nor corrections inflicted to wipe it off, but all suspend judgment, and death wipes it off.” A similar doctrine is taught by the Jerusalem Gemara; now Christ says, “this is a blasphemy which shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come, that is, neither before death, nor as you dream by death.”—*Lightfoot*, vol. xi. p. 198.

maineth no more sacrifice for sin." This is emphatically, "*the sin which is unto death.*" The sin which smites the soul with death in time, and makes it feel the bitterness of the second death for ever and ever. It is the sin, for the forgiveness of which no prayer is allowed to be offered, no intercession can be availing. As though God said to his praying people, in reference to the man who commits this sin, what he once said to Moses in reference to the Israelites, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven." While this sin precludes from the sinner everything in the prospect of the future, but "a fearful looking-for of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Let us remember that "sufficient to such a man is this punishment," without any *man* judging him, so as to shut him out from his sympathy and his prayers. Let prayer be offered even for the most abandoned and desperate apostates, under the conviction that the human mind is incompetent accurately to judge of the heart,—that it is exclusively the province of God,—and that it is at all times better, when conduct towards our fellow-men is at issue, to err on the side of mercy than on the side of severity. "Pray for all men," should be our rule, because clearly enjoined by Divine authority, and we ourselves are yet in the flesh. And it is difficult for *an individual* to determine whether *he* has committed this sin, and must

be much more difficult for him to arrive at a correct conclusion in reference to another.

What are the peculiar characteristics of the unpardonable sin? is a question which deserves to be considered with serious thought and fervent prayer. Oh that the Holy Spirit would afford his aid to guide our thoughts aright, and assist us to understand this solemn truth, which his word has taught, but which we are slow to learn. The first peculiar characteristic of the unpardonable sin is, that it is committed *against extraordinary knowledge and convincing evidence*. This was the distinguishing and aggravating character of this sin, when committed by the Pharisees, and exposed by Christ. Most of the Jews sinned in rejecting Christ, though the knowledge he imparted, and the evidence he afforded of his divinity, very far exceeded, yet abundantly confirmed, all the revelations which God had previously made to man. In rejecting him, they virtually rejected at once Moses and the prophets,—the whole testimony of the Spirit concerning Christ,—and this, sin as it was, they might have committed with comparative impunity, had not Christ appeared, having the Spirit without measure,—a more legible transcript of the mind of the Spirit,—a most touching portrait of the heart of God. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin.” The scribes and the

Pharisees, whom Christ addressed on this subject, were constant attendants on his ministry, knew his doctrine, were eye-witnesses of the miracles by which it was confirmed, and were the subjects of those convincing operations which heavenly truth is calculated to produce on the judgment and the conscience. Here every circumstance that could be imagined to give force to truth and weight to evidence was in full exercise. And yet in defiance of this knowledge, and in resistance of this evidence, they, in the absence of temptation, not terrified by the fear of persecution, grossly insulted that Spirit, who is the author of light and knowledge, whose work is to convince and enlighten, insulted him by imputing to the Son of God, in whom the Spirit dwelt, the practice of deceit, and alliance with Satan; by giving utterance to sentiments which, in their judgment and conscience, they knew to be false. Here the means of knowing Christ and witnessing the manifestations of the Spirit's power were extraordinary,—every sense was a medium through which knowledge flowed to the mind.

And in every subsequent period, during which inspired men could mark the commission of this sin, extraordinary knowledge seems to have been an essential feature. They who commit it, must be "those who were once enlightened," which phrase, as usually employed by the apostle, means something more than

a superficial and theoretical acquaintance with the truths of Christianity;—all that may be attained purely by a mental effort, disciplinary process, by study and perseverance, the same as any science or art is attainable by attention and diligence. But the enlightening, to which the apostle refers, is traceable to the operations of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Owen says, “The illumination here intended, is attended with efficacy in the conscience and the whole soul, producing abstinence from sin, and the performance of known duties. Hence, persons under the power of it oftentimes walk blamelessly in the world. Besides, there is an alliance between spiritual gifts, that where any one of them resides, it has assuredly some other belonging to its train. Even a single talent is made up of many pounds.”^a And there are in the present day those who, in addition to an education strictly religious, have received those influences of the Holy Spirit, by which their judgments have been convinced, their consciences affected, and their whole conduct changed; they are, in the scriptural sense, “enlightened.” They acknowledge the power of the Spirit on their minds,—they surpass many others in their religious acquirements,—their profession of the Gospel is public,—their zeal in the cause of Christ is energetic and enter-

^a Owen on the Hebrews, vol. iii. p. 129.

prising,—they do many things gladly in the name of Christ,—they give convincing proofs that they “*know the truth*,”—know it in its power to enlighten, to convince, and to save. They are enlightened and are lights to others, like lamps enkindled at heaven’s altar. They continue for a while. Many for a season rejoice in their light. And yet it may require less than ten years’ observation before a scene, in which they are the principal actors, shall be presented, which shall make a church and a pastor weep over them, saying, “It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” There may be a backsliding or departure from God, that is not final. Many, after much enlightenment, have fallen, and been raised again, so that they have had to say with David, “He restoreth my soul.” Yet it is amidst light, and in direct opposition to spiritual light, that this sin is committed. And though all sin against light and knowledge cannot be regarded as the unpardonable sin, yet it is of great importance that the strictest care be taken to keep at the farthest remove from all the appearance of it; and perhaps it was expressed the more obscurely in Scripture, on purpose to promote such a caution. It will generally be found that those who fear that they have committed it, or that they may commit it, are those who are farthest

from it; while those who have committed it, have generally appeared under the most awful delusion; calm, because indifferent, blind and insensible to their perilous condition. Saul of Tarsus, though a persecutor of Christianity, so that he would have extirpated it from our world, yet he did it not only ignorantly and in unbelief; but religiously, thinking that he was doing God's service. His education and early pursuits kept him aloof from those evidences of Christianity, and those hallowed influences which might have carried conviction to his conscience. He heard of this new sect, which was opposed to the traditions of the fathers, and, ardent in temperament, and energetic in character, like many in the present day, he waited not to investigate, but began to persecute he knew not what. Now, great as was the sin of Saul in rejecting and persecuting Christianity, yet it was very different from the sin against the Holy Spirit,—as he neither knew nor believed that it had its foundation deeply laid in the oracles of truth. But the unpardonable sin is a total rejection of Christianity, with a clear knowledge of its merits, and a full conviction of the validity of its claims.

A SECOND *characteristic of this sin, is its wilfulness.* This is prominently set forth by the apostle, when he says, “For if we, *wilfully sinning*, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth

no more sacrifice for sin." A man may be hurried inadvertently into sin by the force of temptation ; and hence the Jews were accustomed to distinguish between sins of thoughtlessness and sins of presumption. It is evident that the apostle classes the unpardonable sin with the latter kind, by saying that it is committed after *being enlightened*, and *willingly*, that is to say, *deliberately, with forethought, with settled intention*, and not by the sudden and violent force of temptation. One who had long been accustomed to think and write upon the deep things of God, has left us his view of that sin, upon which alone the irrevocable anathema rests. "It is evident," he says, "what is that sin, against which this heavy doom is denounced ; a relinquishment and renunciation of the truth of the Gospel and its precious promises, with all duties thereunto belonging, after we have been convinced of its truth, and avowed its power and excellency ; and this willingly ; not upon a *sudden surprisal* and temptation, as Peter denied Christ—not on those compulsions and fears which may work a transient dissimulation, without an internal rejection of the Gospel—not through *darkness*,—ignorance, making an impression for a season on the minds and reasonings of men ; which things, though exceedingly evil and dangerous, may befall them who yet contract not the guilt of this sin ; but *by*

choice, of their own accord,—from the internal pravity of their own minds, and an evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God ; and it is farther implied, that they do it with the preference of another way of trust and confidence before the Gospel ; whereas there were *two things* which were the *foundation* of the profession of the Gospel ; the blood of the covenant, or the blood of the sacrifice of Christ, with the atonement made thereby, and the dispensation of the Spirit of grace ; these they openly renounced, and declared that there was nothing of God in them.^a There is in this specific sin a violation of all the laws which ordinarily regulate the mind, in arriving at practical results. On every other subject,—sufficient information being afforded, the understanding enlightened,—the judgment convinced,—the assent gained and avowed,—and that upon a question involving personal interest,—a conduct corresponding with such convictions and professions usually follows. But in reference to the sin now considered, there is an utter abandonment of the Gospel, in defiance of the most enlightened views of its nature,—deep convictions of its importance and excellence, and of professions of warm attachment, repeated by many public acts in its favour, and con-

^a Dr. Owen, Com. Heb. vol. iv. p. 65.

firmed by a steadfastness amidst the vicissitudes of years. It is choosing death avowing its hideousness, and rejecting life acknowledging its charms.

A *THIRD characteristic of this sin, is its malignity.* It is committed, after there has been a considerable degree of experience of the sweetness and enjoyments of religion: "They have *tasted* of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have *tasted* the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." The sacred writers uniformly use the word *taste* in its metaphorical sense, as expressive of experience. They have felt a deep personal interest in the truths of the Gospel; they have realised its strengthening power in resisting temptation; they have been comforted with its consolations under calamity in various forms; they have felt the present joys it imparts as far superior to any the world can afford; they have cherished the hope and anticipation of eternal glory; they have told others of their transports and joys, derived from the Gospel. They have thus had some personal experience of the love of the Spirit, and of the grace of Christ,—to that Spirit, and that atonement, they acknowledge themselves debtors for all they have enjoyed in the ways of religion. The malignity of the heart is virulent, when it tramples upon its own happiness to reach the object of its hatred; but it is more virulent still,—it aims at the destruction of the source

whence all its happiness proceeds. And this is the malignity which marks the unpardonable sin ; it treads under foot the Son of God, treats the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, and does despite unto the Spirit of grace. And all this it does with a vivid remembrance of the compassion of the Son of God,—of the peace his atoning blood brought to the conscience, and of the continued influence, striving, and forbearance of the Spirit. There are sharper thorns than those which scarred the brow of Christ, and more rugged nails than those that fixed his hands and feet, and a more deadly spear than that which pierced his side, on the day of his crucifixion, and these are the weapons with which the men, who have known something of his love, “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” His wounds received in the house of his friends are deep and painful ; but the wounds received from the friend becoming an avowed enemy, a determined foe, are wounds inflicted by weapons dipped in the poison of asps. These are the boldest, the most daring attempts of the human heart against the Spirit, to frustrate his work, since all his operations are intended to glorify Christ,—and all these displays of malignity are intended, to dishonour and degrade Christ in the esteem of men. As their conduct, upon a first view,—and many will not pause to examine,—seems to be a testimony

against the validity of the Gospel,—a testimony, too, deriving some weight from the fact, that they had given it a fair trial, that they had weighed it in the balances, and found it wanting. Now, however incorrect such a conclusion may be, yet it is that, at which the many would arrive, while only the few would understand their conduct in its proper light, as a most affecting demonstration of the very utmost extent to which the enmity of the heart could proceed. Had not facts put the matter beyond all doubt, it might have been thought impossible that a heart could have lived so near the cross, and yet its enmity, not only unsubdued, but still rampant ; that a heart could be so near the kingdom of heaven, and yet retain so much of hell. From the cross of Christ there has gone forth an influence to subdue and attract thousands and thousands of hearts to itself, and that influence continues in its undiminished power : but that surely must be a monstrous specimen of a depraved heart, that, after having been brought within the attraction of the cross, and moving round it like a planet in its appropriate orbit, shall bound away, and become a repellant to the very influence it once sweetly acknowledged and obeyed. Yet this is the true picture of the heart that commits the sin against the Holy Ghost. It deserts its orbit, becomes a “wandering star to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”

THE FOURTH *characteristic of the sin under consideration, is its final impenitence.* Ordinarily considered, repentance or impenitence is separate and distinct from sin ; it is a state of mind subsequent to the commission of sin ; but in this extraordinary sin, impenitence is an essential feature, and the evidence of its existence. “It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” A determined and maintained impenitence, inseparably connected with an entire rejection of the Gospel, and suppression of every hallowed emotion, are distinctive proofs of the sin denounced. Obstinate *barring* the doors of the heart against the Holy Spirit, the only agent that can produce repentance, and *spurning* the atonement, the proximate cause of repentance, are the peculiarities of the sin, and constitute its virulence and enormity. Hence the emphatic language of the apostle, ‘they have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, by which they were set apart, as an unholy thing, and *done despite* to the Spirit of grace.” The heart which can commit this sin, has arrived at a degree of obduracy which no ordinary means can subdue ; left to the choice it has made, and abandoned of God, all the universe seems to be prohibited from exerting any salutary influence on that heart,—over it hangs the awful sentence, “Let him alone.” That heart may be seen like some dark, gloomy morass, in the midst of a scene where beauty

and fruitfulness abound. The gentle showers, dews, and shining sun, which fertilise and cheer all around, that morass receives, only to produce noxious vapours and vilest reptiles. Such is the heart abandoned of God. The man who has committed this sin never feels any compunction, never knows any meltings of heart, never has any desire to return to Christ, and again seek and enjoy his Spirit. If ever he now visit the house of God, or look into the sacred book, or associate with the sincere and healthy Christian, his object is remote from any expectation of bettering the condition of his soul. Amidst causes which ordinarily produce emotion, he remains unmoved. At one time in his history he was wont to welcome the return of every religious exercise with delight, and attend it with reverence and deep emotion. He heard the word, and trembled, or rejoiced; he observed the varied events of Providence, endeavoured to read their meaning, and received the instruction they conveyed; he read the sacred book, and faithfully probed his own heart with this instrument of heavenly temper; he joined in the fervent prayer, felt the confessions made, and the petitions offered; and retired to weep. But oh, how changed! He now listens to the most pungent and pathetic appeals to the conscience, and he trembles not; he now witnesses calamities around him, and afflictions come thickly upon him, and he remains unmoved;

he now reads the word of God, and those truths he once owned as the strivings of the Spirit with him, but now he has become as impervious and as insensible as the adamant; the sufferings, agony, and death of Christ are presented to his view in the holy sacrament; at these he was wont to weep and be in bitterness, while repentance poured forth her stream of tears.

And weeps he now? No, to his weary eyes
The bliss of tears, his frozen heart denies;
Remorse, or sigh, breathes not upon his lips,
His life is one dark, fatal, deep eclipse.

Could the slightest indication of contrition appear, it would be the morning-star,—the prelude of returning day to the soul. It would be an evidence, that though the apostacy of heart and life had been great, yet, that the Spirit of grace and supplication had not relinquished his hold on the soul,—that he was still there, resuscitating the life that was almost extinct. Repentance in the apostate, is like the returning pulse in the man that was supposed to be dead,—the paleness and passiveness of death were upon him; all around pronounced him dead, while all anxiously looked and hoped for some indications of life, and at length, the delicate and experienced touch of the friend perceives the pulse faintly beating, proving that the heart is resuming its action; hope is cherished, and the vital warmth diffuses through the frame, and tears and mourning give place

to the smile of joy, and the song of thanksgiving. And thus it is when the backslider returns, and the apostate repents.

The sin pronounced unpardonable, is not backsliding or even falling into flagrant sins, from which there may be recovery by repentance, nor is it any sin where contrition is found to follow ; but it is the wilful rejection of Christianity as a system, with a perfect knowledge of its excellence, and a deep conviction of its power, and this rejection maintained with impenitence till death.

It is now necessary briefly to notice, *some reasons why this sin is unpardonable*. It might be a sufficient reason with some minds, as it ought to be with all, that it has been pronounced unpardonable by Him, who will ultimately and irrevocably fix the eternal destinies of men. There are satisfactory evidences to show, that that decision is not an unjust or arbitrary one ; but that it is righteous and necessary. The truths of the Gospel are something more than the doctrines of a creed, or the shibboleth of a party ; they are the great principles of the moral government of God, under the new dispensation. And by these, all questions pertaining to the punishment or pardon of a sinner are to be determined,—these are the terms of salvation as they relate both to man, and to the Divine government.

The sin described *is unpardonable because it is in itself a rejection of the only terms on which pardon can*

be consistently granted. When God pardons a sinner, he does so in consideration of that great fact in his moral government, when his own and equal Son offered himself as an atonement for sin. That uttered the meaning of types, and explained to men in the plainest language, how God could be just, and the justifier of the sinner who believes in Jesus. And now the proclamation is published to the very ends of the earth, that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” Faith, an entire reliance on a crucified Saviour, is the only requisite for the attainment of pardon. While thus freely and fully the terms of pardon are made known, yet these refused, all hope is cut off from the sinner. “Without shedding of blood there can be no remission,”—no pardon,—was the sentence repeated in almost all the rites and ceremonies of the Levitical law. The victims then slain were mementoes of this principle, of this only condition, on which a righteous God would bestow pardon; but now *the shedding of blood* in reality has taken place, in the sufferings and death of Christ. And without *it* there is no pardon. This truth is repeated, in varied and emphatic forms, by the ministry and writings of the apostles. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” We have no reason to believe, that God can pardon sin on any other terms. How shall we escape if *we*

neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ? Here the truth is very clearly implied,—*that if the means for saving a sinner, which infinite mercy has provided and published, be neglected, then that there is no alternative, but that the sinner must perish.* Now, the rejection of the sacrifice of Christ, the renunciation of the atonement, after a thorough conviction of its infinite merits, is the sin upon which the irrevocable denunciation rests. If *neglect* of the only means of salvation must necessarily leave the sinner with all his sins unpardoned, and all his guilt uncanceled, then much more powerful must be the reason, why that sin should be unpardonable, which continues *wilfully and finally to spurn and despise* the only medium of a sinner's salvation.

That this sin is unpardonable, *because the state of mind it indicates, is at variance with the condition upon which alone God will bestow pardon.* Government is brought into contempt, when sin is committed with impunity. To forgive sin to the relentless transgressor, would be to offer a premium to disobedience, and to bring the whole system of moral government into contempt. There is no sin, however flagrant and

aggravated,—no course of sin, however long continued, from which pardon is excluded, if faith and repentance, for they are twin graces in the soul, are found to exist. Faith beholds the enormity of sin in the sufferings of Christ,—repentance mourns over sin, and hates it, confesses that the law is holy, just, and good, and owns the righteousness of the sentence which condemns the guilty. Not that repentance is the price of pardon ; but it is that state of mind, which God the Spirit, in the freeness of his grace, produces ; and in producing repentance, it is only grace for grace, one act of his infinite love making way for another on a more extensive scale, for throughout all the provinces of his empire on earth, God has caused proclamation to be made, that, “ If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” As though God said to the sinner, “ I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should repent, and turn from his ways, and live. For this, I have given up my own Son, to honour my law, and meet its utmost demands ; for this I have sent my Spirit to enlighten and soften the heart ; and all I ask of thee, sinner, is that thou confess thy guilt, and show thy contrition, and pardon is thine, freely thine.” But this sin, is found so to paralyse all the sensibilities of the heart, that no relentings, no contrite emotions are there ; and though pardon is offered on the simple

condition of *accepting* it as a guilty sinner,—taking the position of lowliness and repentance, yet this sin maintains an obstinate resistance to these proffers of mercy, and is unpardoned, and must necessarily be unpardonable.

In the last place, the peculiar sin under consideration is unpardonable, *as it is accompanied with the aggravation of doing despite to the Spirit of grace, in his work of saving mercy.* All the mercy conceived in the heart of the Father, in his purpose of the salvation of man,—all the grace and compassion manifested to man by the Son,—the Spirit, in his own gracious work, has undertaken to apply to the hearts of men, by coming into immediate contact with their ignorance, depravity, and prejudices, and thus to carry out the results, which redeeming love had contemplated from eternity. The sin is not merely against the Spirit in his essential deity and oneness with the Father and the Son; but also against the special office he undertakes as the Enlightener and Sanctifier of the sinner. Dr. Owen observes, “Hence is the sin against the Holy Ghost unpardonable; and hath that adjunct of sin put upon it, that no other sin hath; namely, because he comes not, he acts not in his own name only, though in his own also, but in the name and authority of the Father and Son, from and by whom he is sent; and therefore to sin against him, is to sin against all the authority of

God, all the love of the Trinity, and the utmost condescension of each person to the work of our salvation. It is, I say, from the authoritative mission of the Spirit, that the sin against him is peculiarly unpardonable ; it is a sin against the recapitulation of the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit. And from this consideration, might the true nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost be investigated. Certainly it must consist in the contempt of some operation of his, as acting in the name and authority of the whole Trinity, and that in their ineffable condescension to the work of grace.”^a

We may rest assured that HE whose heart, and words, and deeds, were ever full of love to man, would never have given utterance to a sentence so awful, as that denounced against the sin against the Holy Ghost, unless he had perceived in it an enormity far surpassing all other sins. His holy mind, deeply abhorred sin in every form ; all manner of sin against himself he can forgive ; but the sin that spurns his Spirit in carrying out the purpose of his Father’s love, and the design of his own sacrifice, raises between him and the sinner a barrier, over which his forgiving love cannot pass.

While there are many reasons to hope that this sin is but rarely committed, yet it must not be forgotten, that we live under the dispensation of the Spirit, and

^a Dr. Owen’s Works, vol. x. p. 281.

it becomes us constantly to take heed to ourselves, to guard, and to pray against the veriest incipient process of grieving the Spirit by backslidings of heart. The sacred Scriptures have left this subject, like the ancient shrine of Jehovah, enveloped in a cloud, and probably for the same reason, that the most presumptuous might not dare to rush there, and that *all* may be filled with fear at the remotest approach. Caution is at all times seasonable where danger is constant. This subject proclaims caution to one class of persons against presumption, and to another against despair. The man who dares not renounce Christianity, will perhaps deny some of its doctrines, and trifle with its ordinances ; let him not presume,—this beginning of profanity is like the flowing of the crater, which encrusts the surface of its source, and renders it impervious to every softening influence.

The humble believer, who, in times of mental depression, writes bitter things against himself, fears that he has committed the unpardonable sin, mourns and repents before God for the wanderings of his heart, and yet upon his spirits, there is a dread approaching to despair, that God will not regard his grief, nor hear his supplications. Reader, if your character is here described, thy fears are the pledges of thy safety,—thy tears the prelude of coming enjoyment ; grieve not Christ by seeming to doubt the efficacy of his blood, on

which the eye of your faith is fixed,—grieve not the Holy Spirit, by making your ever-changing feelings the arbiters of your happiness, and as though the stores of his consolations had failed ; but look steadily to Christ as thine in all the unchanging love of his heart, and to the Holy Spirit as the author of thy new nature,—thy Sanctifier and Comforter.

PART III.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

SECTION I.

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

“ How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious ?”
EPIST. TO CORINTHIANS.

THE history of Divine revelations, is a deeply interesting study. The manner in which those revelations have been made, furnishes a pleasing illustration of the mercy they were designed to make known. The intercourse between God and his creature man, during the short-lived reign of innocence, was as the intercourse of endeared friendship. But when sin entered, the intercourse became more distant, and the communication infrequent. The voice of prophecy, at remote intervals, and in mystic terms, broke the silence of earth, and gave an indefinite intimation of a coming Saviour. Approach to God was allowed, but only at given periods, and with appropriate sacrifice. Enough of mercy shone on man, to prevent despair, and yet not enough to

allow him to hope without fear and trembling. Some mysterious person appeared, or some affecting event transpired, that told that God had not abandoned his new world, that all intercourse with his intelligent creature man, was not wholly discontinued. At length, a whole system of rites and ceremonials, was given to man, a system bearing on it, the seal of Divine origin, and intended as the means and directions for publicly recognising and worshipping the supreme Being,—a system enforced by the most rigorous sanctions, and observed with the most scrupulous exactness. And man had comparatively no intercourse with God, but through mediators, and they were specially appointed and set apart to their office by the most solemn process calculated to fill the minds of observers with the profoundest awe. Although God was satisfied with the engagement into which he had entered with his Son, for meeting the demands of justice, and for honouring his own law, yet it was necessary, for the vindication of his honour, as the moral governor of the universe, that every appearance of treating sin with impunity or indifference, should be avoided. The very manner in which God permitted man to have intercourse with him, was a perpetual memento of his abhorrence of sin, and of the distance of the sinner from his God. The *patriarchal dispensation* contained much that was incorporated in the *Mosaic*; though the latter was more

organised than the former. The Mosaic dispensation was but a shadow of a coming crisis, intended to pass away when the substance appeared. Under this dispensation, many prophets were raised up, and by them, predictions of the glorious and approaching era, were delivered, increasing in their number and their clearness until the period, emphatically called, "the fulness of time" arrived. This starry dispensation gradually faded away, as the Sun of Righteousness dawned on our world. The advent of Christ was a most memorable era in the history of our world. His ministry was a new dispensation. The sacrifice and the oblation ceased, when the true Messiah came. God came nearer to man than at any former period,—God incarnate dwelt with man on the earth. This near approach of God to man, presented a striking contrast with his former style of intercourse. The apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, who were familiar with the Mosaic dispensation, says, "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." This was the bright era, to which patriarchs and prophets looked by faith, and were exhilarated at the anticipation of its approach. Christ, who for ages had minutely observed the thoughts and emotions of human hearts, reproved the Jews, and showed them that they manifested a spirit unlike the patriarch of

whom they boasted, when he said, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad." When addressing his own disciples he pronounced on them this remarkable benediction, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see ; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Language like this, is calculated to impress the mind with the importance and value of the days of the Son of God upon earth. Christ's sojourn in our world, was a dispensation of mercy eminently calculated to impress and interest the heart. It was not only a fulfilment of prophecy, and thus far a confirmation of the faithfulness of God ; but it was an indication, that God was reconciled to man, and that intercourse, as close and as endearing as that known in Eden, was now restored. It seems to have entered into the plan of the Divine procedure, that as in nature, so in the revelations of grace,—there should be a gradual developement. And as one dispensation has been introductory to another subsequent and remote, so the dispensation, the system of peculiar privileges of Christ's earthly career, was subservient to another form of the manifestation of Divine mercy,—THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT. The Gospel is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit.

I. *As it is distinguished from any former dispensation for its spirituality.* The economy which preceded and passed away, was remarkable for its cumbrous ceremonial, and its appeal to the senses. Every religious exercise, told that man was separated from his God. Jesus Christ was the day's-man, so desired by the patriarch; he laid his hands on both parties. His ministry brought heaven and earth nearer together. And God, whom no man had seen and lived, appeared in the person of Christ: as he said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also." The whole of his intercourse with men, was admirably adapted to call away their attention from the mere circumstantialities of religion,—to fix their attention on its real and vital principles,—and to prepare their minds for the full manifestation. His conversation with the woman of Samaria, is a beautiful specimen of the style and tendency of his instructions. Treating the question about the sacredness of Gerizim, and the sacredness of Jerusalem, as of no importance, he passes on to the spiritual view of a still weightier question, saying, "The time cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." As though the Saviour had said, "The dispensation will be more fully revealed, and it has

even now already begun, when the veneration given to places and things reputed holy, shall be transferred to the only one proper object of supreme veneration and worship ; even to the living and true God ; and when he shall be known to be worshipped, not merely by the outward observance of a prescribed ritual ; but by the soul being devout and ardent in all its approaches to God ;—this shall be esteemed the true worshipper, to whatever tribe of the human family he may belong, or wherever may be the spot, from which his adorations may arise.” This gave man a more spiritual view of the Divine nature, and of the character of the worship he required, than had been given by any previous revelation. Yet this was only preparatory to more instruction, showing the spirituality of that dispensation, which was then dawning on the world ; and before which, all the pride of Judaism, and the formal sanctity of Phariseism, were to fade away. The first doctrine which Nicodemus heard from the lips of Christ, was the doctrine of a spiritual change, as being absolutely necessary to prepare for heaven ; Christ, as the harbinger of the dispensation of the Spirit, continued to lead forward the minds of his disciples, to the anticipation of the precious gift, and of the great and appropriate blessings the Spirit would impart. Upon no subject did the Saviour more delight to dwell than upon this ;—no other subject was so fruitful of consolation to

his disciples as this ; when he tenderly felt for them, in the prospect of their being left without his daily instruction, vigilance, care, his mind was refreshed by the efficient and suitable offices his Spirit would perform. In the contemplation of these, he says, I will not leave you bereft and desolate ; one, my equal and substitute, shall be with you,—a Being, whom the world cannot receive ; the world neither knows him, nor appreciates his work ; but ye shall receive him, and realise the consolation of his presence, as your Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. And that, it might be understood by the first disciples and by subsequent believers, that this was *a permanent* donation to the church,—a gift that was to give a new character to their position and prospects in the world,—to sustain them amidst the ever-fluctuating scenes of the Christian life,—animate them to arduous and enterprising efforts in preaching the Gospel,—and to shed its salutary influence unabated to the very end of time, Christ assures them that the Spirit *shall abide with them for ever*. This assurance, which Christ gave to his disciples, clearly points out that he refers not to a brief solitary period, but to a series of blessings running parallel with the course of coming years. It relates not to an event, but to an age. Not a single blessing ; but a dispensation.

Apostles constantly refer to the *spirituality* of the

Gospel, as far greater than any former dispensation. And one object ever kept in view, in all the epistles they wrote, was to call away the attention of the early Christians from mere outward forms to the vital and spiritual character of genuine religion. Hence the comprehensive language employed in the epistle to the Romans, "For the kingdom of God," or genuine religion, "is not meat and drink ; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The same sentiment is conveyed in the other epistles, but in none more forcibly than in the epistle to the Corinthians. The apostle Paul, alluding to the Gospel, and to the Spirit by whom he was called to preach that Gospel, says, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament ; not of the letter, but of the spirit ; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." This passage, as will appear from the whole context, presents a striking and beautiful contrast between an economy, which consisted of formalities, and one which recognised the life-giving power of the Spirit of God on the heart, as its essential and distinguishing principle. This we venture to think, is the legitimate meaning of the passage, and that it was remote from the intention of the Spirit, by suggesting such language, thereby to depreciate his own written word. It has been frequently quoted for that purpose, though its design and meaning were very different. The whole of the Mosaic ritual

might be most punctiliously observed, and the soul remain dead in trespasses and sins ; but in the preaching of the Gospel, the Spirit of life ^{gives} his quickening and saving power. This is ^{another} another reason why the preaching of the Gospel is called “ the ministration of the Spirit,”

II. *As it is the medium for the manifestation of the Spirit's grace and omnipotence.* The provision of infinite mercy had been made for guilty man,—the remedy had been completed in the death of Christ ; and the Spirit, who foreknew the obduracy of the human heart, and the stubbornness of the will, said, “ I will come and heal him.” He undertook the work of affecting the heart, and subduing the will, so as to bring the remedy and the woe to be relieved into effective contact. And while as a sovereign he might have accomplished this work without any intervening medium,—without any visible means, yet his grace is specially manifested, in appointing an order of means, by which he will so bring *himself* into immediate contact with the minds of men, that they shall be enlightened, convinced, and changed, as if by the ordinary process of persuasion. “ It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save some.” In the ministration of the Gospel, men hear, believe, and rejoice in salvation, *as if* of their own choice. Here the preacher is seen, the truth and the voice are heard ; but the mighty worker in all the

triumphs of truth is unseen. As in the economy of nature, the one mighty agent commands the dew-drop where to rest, and the thunder where to roll, so in the economy of grace, the means are visible, but the Holy Spirit is the unseen agent, working by these means.

“ He ceaseless works alone : and yet alone
Seems not to work.”

It is his peculiar work to have access to the innermost thoughts and feelings of the heart, and there to impart an influence, at once so gentle and yet so effective, that they who have realised say, “They have been made willing in the day of his power.” Though he is the Holy Spirit, and hates all sin, yet is he gracious, and loves the sinner. He knows the sinner can never be happy, while he remains unrenewed and unsanctified. Depravity is the bane of enjoyment. And one of the most hideous forms of depravity, is resistance of the Spirit of grace ; yet with that form of depravity, as well as every other, the Spirit grapples, until sin is vanquished in the stronghold of the heart, and holiness is implanted there, continually strengthened under the vigilant superintendence of its heavenly Author. All who witness the change, with correct views of the manner, in which it has been brought about, are constrained to say, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.” Yet thou-

sands and thousands of such processes are going on, and such changes are daily effected through the preaching of the Gospel. Observing angels witness these displays of the Spirit's grace, these achievements of his power, and they mark the present as the dispensation of the Spirit. Facts like those to which reference has been made, marked the earliest days of apostolic labour ; and the first preachers of the Gospel had splendid specimens of the Spirit's grace and power, to which they could refer. They had seen those, who had been notorious for every sin, that meets the eye of God and man, —and in direct allusion to every class of sinners, the apostle Paul addressed the converted Corinthians, " And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The preaching of the Gospel continues to be the order of instrumentality, which the Spirit honours, and the medium of manifesting his grace and power to the hearts of sinners. The preaching of the Gospel is the dispensation of the Spirit,

III. *As it is the grand era in the history of the church, to which all predictions and prophecies were directed.* The attention of the ancient church, amidst all its vicissitudes of trial and sorrow, was ever pointed to the coming future ; while in its distance, they saw the work and glory of the Messiah. That glory was seen

as immediately consequent on the atonement being completed; and contrary, as it might seem, to the exclusive views, they generally entertained, they beheld with joy the kingdom of Christ, embracing and consolidating all nations, Gentiles and Jews, in one band of holy brotherhood. An epitome of the foundation of these hopes and expectations may be seen in the 53rd and 54th chapters of Isaiah. These chapters, viewed as one continued prophecy, are strikingly beautiful. As though the prophet, under the Divine afflatus, saw the Saviour, and minutely watched him through the whole of his earthly sojourn; but lingered with absorbed attention, on the four days which closed the tragic scene. While his whole soul riveted in contemplation to the facts, and wondering what they meant;—other beings were observers. All heaven beheld the Eternal, accepting a sacrifice more costly than all the gems of earth, and diadems of heaven; the Spirit, the author of all true prophecy, saw the altar and the expiring victim; and saw also the wide range of time and space, through which its efficacy should continue blessing the thousand tribes of men; at such a glorious scene, the joyous command is given, “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear,—break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child, for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of

thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations ; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes ; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.” The event was worthy of the joy. It was the beginning of a new and happy era of our world. Then the partition, which separated the holy place from the court of the Gentiles, and the vail, that hid the shechinah, were taken away, and distant nations heard the voice from the excellent glory, saying, Come ; and let him that heareth, say, Come ; and whosoever will, let him come, and take salvation freely.

Many other predictions sustained the hopes of the Jewish church, that all idolatrous and persecuting nations should be brought to own and worship the true God. But this prospect they invariably associated with some views of an extraordinary manifestation of Divine influence, which should mark *those days*, as distinct and separate from other portions of history. Years and even centuries were to roll on, and events were to arise in their appointed order and succession, each having its appropriate influence in preparing the way for the coming crisis ; at length the dawn of brighter days appears,—the Sun of Righteousness arises,—the church hears the voice of the Lord saying, “ Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath risen

upon thee ; though indeed, darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, yet the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

These events were of a nature so cheering as to imbue the times of their occurrence with a distinctive character.

When reference is made to them, it is usually in language sufficiently descriptive of the new, but final dispensation. "*In those days*, saith the Lord of hosts, ten men out of all languages of the nations, shall take hold, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you : for we have heard that God is with you." And in the memorable prediction delivered by Joel, the emphatic sentence, "*In those days*" marks the period of the blessing ; the era long anticipated by the church,—the beginning and the season of its exaltation and enlargement. The apostle Peter, under the influence of the Spirit, alludes to this prediction as fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when he said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ; And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams ; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out *in those days* of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy ; and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath ; blood,

and fire, and vapour of smoke ; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that *great and notable day of the Lord* come ; and it shall come to pass, that *whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Language intended to indicate the entire revolution which should take place in the economy of religion then in existence, and to point out the dispensation of the Spirit. This was the beginning of *the days* when the Spirit was to magnify his office, and gather to the fold of the true church nations, which had been hitherto regarded as outcasts from the provisions of Divine mercy. The prediction of Isaiah was to be fully accomplished by the work of the Spirit,—the prediction, in which the Eternal Father had promised to his Son, “I will also give thee a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth. Behold, these shall come from afar ; and lo, these from the north, and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim (China.) Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold, all these gather themselves together, and come to thee ; as I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thyself with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bridle.” We are permitted to live in the days of the dispensation of the Spirit when this prediction is partially fulfilled. We have seen that China has now opened her massive gates to receive the Gospel ; already

has China with other nations once sunk in idolatry, furnished illustrious trophies of the Spirit's grace and power, constraining us to say, in the language of thanksgiving, "The Lord the Spirit hath done great things for them, whereof we are glad. Blessed are our eyes, for they see, and our ears, for they hear, things which prophets and righteous men desired to see, and have not seen them, and to hear, and have not heard them." The purpose is recorded, the decree of eternal love has gone forth, that under the dispensation of the Spirit, all nations shall be subdued to the obedience of Christ. The preaching of the Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit,

IV. *As the whole arrangements and ultimate success are in the hands of the Spirit,*

The truths proclaimed, are originated by the Spirit, and are the transcripts of his mind. Uninspired truth may have its excellences, but it forms no part of the Gospel of Christ. The apostolic epistles derive their value, not from the learning, nor from the piety of the writer, but from the Holy Spirit, the great author of truth. And under whatever circumstances, the Spirit may have revealed truth, it has been subservient to the manifestation of "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is his message, the apostles and their successors proclaim. The test of the legitimacy of their title, is their fidelity to the revelation committed to them. They are called,

“ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God; and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” A deviation from the doctrines taught by the Spirit involves a fearful denunciation. “If any man, or even an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” As ambassadors of reconciliation, they dare not introduce any terms, which are not in their commission.

The agents are selected and qualified by the Spirit. For the work of preaching the Gospel, the Spirit takes men, who are chosen vessels of mercy. *He* pours the first rays of light and conviction into their minds,—conducts them to the cross,—produces faith and repentance, and makes them Christians indeed. Their conversion and subsequent religious experience, are not unfrequently attended with circumstances which eminently prepare their minds for their work,—circumstances which seem to say, “These are only the beginnings of a great work the Spirit designs to accomplish.” In some instances, the conversion is brought about with so much publicity, and with evidences of its origin so clear, as to leave no doubt as to its reality. The conversion of any sinner is a great event; and will be found to be connected, either more directly or indirectly, with the conversion of other souls, and thus will be seen, as a link in an endless series of

events. But in the conversion of those whom the Spirit has chosen as the earthen vessels in which he will put the treasure of the Gospel, there is a grandeur passing description, when viewed as it really is, the creation of a new censer, filled with the purest incense, and intended to be a savour of life unto life, to thousands of immortal souls. Whatever other results may be accomplished in their conversion, all are inferior and subordinate to the great work to which they are called. This was pre-eminently the case in reference to the apostle Paul. And so he viewed his conversion, not so much as intended for his *personal happiness* in time and in eternity. Great and important as this might be, it seemed to disappear before the greater and more sublime object of winning souls. “For *this cause* I obtained mercy, that in me, a chief sinner, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, *for a pattern* to those who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” Renewed by the Spirit,—deeply imbued with his grace,—habituated to devotion,—and experienced in the ways of God, constitute the primary qualifications for the work of the ministry. But these are not all. The Spirit has *gifts* as well as grace to bestow. And gifts are greatly needed by those, who are to instruct others in the doctrines and practice of the Gospel. And as different gifts are necessary for different spheres of labour, so the Spirit, by the gifts he

bestows, seems to point out the particular and suitable scene of each minister's exertions. The first preachers of the Gospel united in the language of one in ascribing all ability and mental endowment entirely to the Spirit, *who* made them *able* ministers of the New Testament.

The sphere of operation is marked out by the Spirit. This feature in the dispensation of the Spirit, most strikingly illustrates his sovereignty. All the movements of the apostles in their missionary efforts, were determined by the fiat of his will. It was at all times a sufficient reason with them, that "they were forbidden" of the Spirit, to go, or to remain at one place, and commanded by the Spirit to go to, or remain in another place. And though not by audible voice, or miraculous communication does he manifest his will now, yet by indications not less decisive, does he regulate and appoint the dates and the localities of ministerial exertions. The control the Holy Spirit exercised, in all evangelising operations, during the first period of the Christian church, may be regarded as a specimen of the manner in which he would administer this dispensation, that an observing universe might see, it was the dispensation of the Spirit.

All the success attending the preaching of the Gospel, is of the Spirit. The opening of this dispensation, was a magnificent illustration of the power of the Spirit, and of the triumphs he would achieve. Peter preached ;

all that was captivating or imposing in his discourse, was its grand simplicity; his aim was to win souls to Christ. The disparity, the incompetence of the means to the end was overwhelming; yet success followed to a degree which the most sanguine could not have expected. Three thousand souls! Three thousand, among whom every form of depravity, superstition and prejudice the heart could know, might be found; that the triumphs of that day might stand, as an answer to unbelief, if, at some future period, it should look on some new form of depravity, and should inquire, "Can the Spirit change this,—this monstrous mass of sin and impurity?" The early ministers of the Gospel, would often turn their attention to this eventful day; and amidst their discouragements would often rejoice that the Spirit's "arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." In the full strength and energy this view of the subject was calculated to afford, apostles went forth assailing sin whether found amidst scenes of civilisation and refinement or heathenish barbarism, and relying on that Spirit, they were never disappointed, but often raised their monument of praise, and inscribed thereon, "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of the knowledge of himself by us in every place." All the subsequent efforts of the church, have recognised

the same cause of success, and have not been disappointed. And wherever the hope is cherished, that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ, that hope of success is founded on the veracity of HIM who has said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The new heaven and the new earth shall appear as the final result of the dispensation of the Spirit.

Since the present is the dispensation of the Spirit, it is not the time for indifference and sloth. This dispensation excludes no tribes nor nations, and knows no limits to its duration, but those of time. The ministration of the Son of God was restricted to the Jewish people,—“I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;” rare and remarkable were the instances in which his compassion or his power was exerted for the benefit of Gentiles. But as he ushered in the ministration of the Spirit, he spake of THE WORLD as the sphere of his operations. Under the new dispensation, *the world* was to be subjected to the obedience of the truth. *The world* is now open to Christian benevolence and enterprise. For *the world* under the present economy is to believe in Christ, and yield obedience to his government. But how can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a preacher? and how can they preach except they be sent? Ezekiel *must prophesy* to the

dry bones, though *only* the Spirit of the Lord can revive them. And Paul and Apollos *must preach*, though neither he that planteth, nor he that watereth, is anything, but God that giveth the increase. The motive to exertion is a powerful one, since that which man cannot accomplish, the Spirit is engaged to achieve. Indolence and inactivity in the cause of souls, become highly criminal, while a blessing so mighty is promised to exertion. It is condescension of the Spirit to employ instrumentality at all; but, having engaged to work through means, it becomes obligatory on Christians to be active, and constantly active, in putting into operation all the processes which the Spirit has engaged to bless, and through which he ordinarily works. The circulation of the word of God,—the propagation of the Gospel,—and the full exhibition of Christian principle, should be the habitual employment of the believer. His contributions will be liberal, his prayers will be fervent, and his efforts will be zealous and untiring, while he looks to the Spirit, whose honour is pledged to grant success.

SECTION II.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST THE END OF THE SPIRIT'S OPERATIONS.

“ He shall glorify me.”

JESUS CHRIST.

WHETHER we look at creation's varied and ample page,—at the complex, but ever harmonious machinery of providence, or at redemption's wondrous scheme, this truth beams upon us with overwhelming lustre and beauty,—*That the glory of God is the ultimate object to which all the arrangements of the Divine mind are directed.* Even facts and occurrences, which by human judgment may be esteemed derogatory and adverse to the glory of God, are found to be parts of a plan, which unerring wisdom has devised, and which omnipotent power has controlled and made to issue in results more glorious than the mind of man could imagine. The darkness and confusion we deplore, often prove like the gloom and tempest of midnight preparing the light, clearness, and order of the approaching day. Experience teaches us to guard against drawing hasty conclusions respecting the ways of God, while a voice

from heaven tells us, "Lo these are parts of his ways," — "In his light shall ye see light."

There are some designs and purposes in which the glory of God is the ultimate end proposed, which he has made known to angels and to men, so clearly, as to make doubt unreasonable, and unbelief sinful. Among these, the design of salvation by Jesus Christ, occupies a most prominent place. Angels knew it as belonging to this class of subjects, when to the listening shepherds on Bethlehem's plains they sung, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." In this design the glory of the Eternal, which had been partially clouded and injured by sin, was to be restored to shine forth in brighter lustre than ever had been known to earth or to heaven. It is here,

"Ten thousand angels learn his name,
Beyond whate'er they knew."

The rescue of a fallen world by the unmerited grace of God is a far greater manifestation of the Divine glory, than all the wonders of his creative power and wisdom. The final accomplishment of this glorious design is entrusted to the Holy Spirit ; he has undertaken the mighty work, to direct his influence to the hearts of men, so that they "shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one mourneth for his first-born." To attract

attention to the cross,—to enlighten and melt the heart by an exhibition of Christ crucified,—to produce renunciation of self and entire reliance on Christ,—to renew and sanctify the heart, are among the principal works he performs for the accomplishment of his own gracious purpose,—to glorify Christ in the salvation of immortal souls. When the Saviour declared of the Spirit, “He shall glorify me,” it was a prediction which was to be fulfilled upon a very extensive scale,—it was the very end and purpose in which all his operations would terminate—the glory of Christ.

I. *This was primarily accomplished in the bestowment of miraculous gifts.* The ten days which intervened between the ascension of Christ and the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, were to the disciples days of prayer, anxiety, and longing expectation. The forty days Christ had been with them, as their risen Saviour, had contributed much to enlighten their minds, to strengthen their faith, and to encourage their hope. The result of Christ's intercourse with his disciples after his resurrection, is beautifully described by the evangelist, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” They had a more intelligent perception of the work of Christ and of the promised blessing ; and waited for its bestowment with enlightened and believing anticipation. “They were all with one accord in one place,” when the Holy Spirit

came upon them. The mighty gift was bestowed amidst the most powerful appeals to the senses,—“the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and the cloven tongues as of fire,” were the sensible indications of the presence of the Spirit. The very fact of the advent of the Spirit glorified Christ, as it illustrated and confirmed his truthfulness and affection to his disciples. But the Spirit was about to glorify Christ yet more, as the cloven tongues of flame plainly intimated. These cloven tongues of flame seemed to be emblems of the gifts, which should enable the apostles to speak “thoughts that breathe and words that burn;” and that in different languages. How marvellous the endowment, that men unversed in the languages of the nations, probably knowing no other than their own vernacular dialect,—how marvellous that men like these, should by a sudden impulse, speak the languages of different nations! They spake them not only correctly and intelligibly, but so forcibly, that the multitude “were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?” They did not speak *unknown tongues*, according to the modern meaning of those words, which is nothing more than unintelligible jargon, prompted by fanatical excitement. The Spirit taught the apostles *languages unknown* to them, but the known, the

native languages of the respective nations of the Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians," for *all* said, "we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." This was a miraculous gift of a very high order,—the more it is examined, the greater will it appear.

The Spirit glorified Christ in this gift, as it was a qualification for preaching Christ, and for this purpose alone was it conferred. The same end is contemplated in all the other miraculous gifts, with which the apostles were endowed, that they might work miracles *in the name of Christ*. They were at all times concerned, that no glory should be given to them on account of the miracles they wrought; they would have considered such an effect, though unintended by them, as painfully disastrous, and subversive of the end designed. When they had healed the lame man at the gate of the temple, they addressed the crowd of spectators thus: "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus." This was their

uniform conduct, to turn away attention offered to themselves, and to direct it to the glory of Christ;—acknowledging that all their gifts and graces were bestowed for that purpose.

II. *The Spirit glorifies Christ in the conversion of sinners.* No sinner is saved, on whose heart the Spirit has not exerted his renewing power. The Spirit magnified his office on the day of Christ's crucifixion, and radiated the crown of thorns with the glory of redeeming power; he achieved a miracle of grace, in the change he had effected on the heart of the man who had reviled Christ; but in a few hours became penitent, and threw himself on the mercy and compassion of the Saviour, saying, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." How wondrous the change! How sudden the transformation! One hour, the man is railing and taunting the suffering Redeemer,—the next hour, he is honouring, believing, trusting him, praying and looking to him, "whom he has pierced." Here the Spirit's power and grace were displayed in an extraordinary manner; and here the glory of Christ was promoted; he is honoured amidst his humiliation, and rewarded in the midst of his sufferings. This triumph of the Spirit was but a prelude to others greater and more glorious. On the day of Pentecost three thousand souls were subdued and converted by the Holy Spirit, and added to the

church. This was a large revenue to the glory of Christ. The number was great; yet there is still another point of interest in this fact,—the diversity of character of those who were the subjects of this change. Every form of depravity, prejudice, and bigotry might be expected to be found here, as well as the variety of habits belonging to men of different climes and nations. This memorable fact presented a specimen and an earnest of the Spirit's future operations,—a model, upon a small scale, of his ultimate work. The full influence of that fact cannot be adequately imagined. Many in Jerusalem, who witnessed it, must have felt their scepticism and their superstition shaken. Even the Jew, most determined in his adherence to “the religion of his fathers,” must have begun to suspect the rightness of his decision in rejecting Jesus of Nazareth, while evidences of his Messiahship were so powerfully exhibited. The vail of prejudice, that was on the heart of the Jew, must in many instances have been *rent in twain*, if not entirely torn away. There might have been seen for succeeding days, in the streets of Jerusalem, groups of men, with anxious looks, uplifted finger, and energetic gesture, while in every group, this was the one absorbing question, “What mean these things which we have seen and heard in these days?” Inquiry thus awakened, under the guidance of the Spirit, would lead to conviction, and conviction

to conversion. And the man who joined in the rabble cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" now convinced, owns with gratitude the cleansing and forgiving efficacy of that blood he was so impatient should be shed.

Nor would the primary vibrations of this fact be confined to the limits of Jerusalem. The new-made vessels of mercy returned to their respective countries. And as they were accustomed to travel in companies, they would be associated with some of their fellow-countrymen, who had not realised the thrilling, transforming power of the Spirit; but to each company there would be but one theme of interest, one topic of conversation,—the scene they had witnessed at Jerusalem. This would be the subject introduced to every town and village at which they rested on their journey. They went forth to every point of the compass. Jerusalem must have appeared like a new luminary in the moral world, sending light in every direction. Medes and Mesopotamians, Romans and Egyptians, became lights to the world, as they went to east and west, to north and south. Nor would the favourite, delightful, and delighting theme abate in interest, when they had reached their longed-for homes. The child would welcome his father on his return, and hang with pleasurable emotion on his lips, while he listened to the recital of what had transpired in the far-famed, but now emphatically, the holy Jerusalem. The Roman

Christian in his own dwelling is surrounded by idolatry and debasing practices, — all social influences are opposed to the new and hallowed impulse his heart received at Jerusalem, yet he has the inward consciousness of peace through Christ,—is thankful for the emancipation he has realised, and “the joy of the Lord is his strength.” The time of trial comes. The festal day of Jupiter arrives, a day when all the inhabitants of Rome do something to honour this god, and to add to the pomp of that day’s pageant; melody and fragrance fill the air; as sounds of tabret and cymbal, viol and harp, sweetly blend; and as chaplets, garlands, and censers pour out perfume; youthful buoyancy and beauty all contribute to enhance the hilarity of the day. Now is the new principle put to the test. The power of religion endows its possessor with decision and prowess. He not only withdraws from the temple of Jupiter, he was wont to visit, and from the procession he was accustomed to join; but he readily gives a reason of the change in his conduct, and of the hope that is in him. What he knows, he begins to tell, of the mysteries of redeeming love. His testimony for “the truth as it is in Jesus,” encourages some who had felt the power of the Spirit, to own it, and induces others to inquire and believe. And here would be the nucleus of the church at Rome, in which many distinguished martyrs were trained, and to which the apostle addressed his memo-

nable epistle. The process and working of the new converts at Rome, would be exemplified in the other kingdoms, provinces, and towns where the other recipients of the pentecostal blessing dwelt. They were lamps kindled by the Spirit, and sent to carry light into the regions of paganism and ignorance. Through the triumphs of the day of Pentecost, Christ was immediately preached, where his name had not been heard; and an impulse was then originated which vibrates now, and will continue to vibrate throughout the world, until the final success of the Gospel shall be an element of the glory of eternity.

The conversations attendant on the bestowment of the pentecostal boon, were only illustrations of the nature, and earnestness of the success of the power the apostles received from on high. All their gifts were subordinate to the conversion of sinners, as a means of glorifying Christ. And this is the end of all the Spirit's arrangements, means and influences which he puts into motion to glorify Christ in the conversion of immortal souls. In every individual instance, in which a sinner is turned from darkness to light, Christ is glorified; his image is transferred,—the efficacy of his grace is displayed,—the virtue of his atonement is illustrated,—the justifying power of his righteousness is set forth, and his mediatorial honour is enhanced.

The Gospel is the power of the Spirit to subdue men

to the obedience of Christ. And this is the mighty means intended to bring an intelligent world in delighted submission to Jesus as Lord of all, while every heart presents its willing oblation, every tongue its song of praise, and every nation of earth shall band together in the unity of love to him. Each nation may maintain its distinctive customs, its peculiar insignia; but over all, shall the banner of the cross wave, and by all shall one practice be observed,—the practice of the primitive church,—the worship of Christ as God.^a In the nineteenth century, we are permitted to see the Spirit glorifying Christ, among the nations of the earth, to an extent, the anticipation of which, in a former century, was pronounced preposterous and fanatic. The records of missionary labour have become the chronicles of the Spirit's triumphs. There has not been one sphere of operation selected, or one form of degraded heathenism or refined idolatry assailed, in which success has been withheld. Some of us, have been permitted to see the Caffre,—the Hottentot,—and the emancipated Negro join in our hallowed services, and to hear them tell of the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts; the Hindu and the Chinese, the Madagash, the Tahitian and Samoan bear their testimony to the Spirit's love and transforming power; and from the Greenlander,

^a “Soliti essent convenire, carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere.”—Plin. Epist.

Siberian, and men of other climes, not here named, have we read their testimony, that they found no peace, knew no solid happiness, till the Spirit opened the eyes of their understanding, turned them from their dumb idols, and revealed Christ to their hearts the hope of glory. Each country has thus presented to Christ a few souls, as the earnest of the ultimate glory, when upon his head shall be many crowns.

In reference to all these triumphs, though men of extraordinary endowments were raised up wonderfully adapted for spheres of extraordinary labour, the whole glory is His who has said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." If we turn our attention to home, and look for the churches and congregations where piety is most healthy and vigorous, where sound conversions to God are the most numerous, we shall find them to be those, where the Spirit is most honoured, by a constant recognition of his work on the heart, and by importunate supplication for his enlightening and quickening blessing. While other places may be found, where the doctrine of Divine influence is not denied ; but where the Spirit is acknowledged as "the mighty agent, that having at the beginning, arranged and put in motion a certain machinery of means, *he leaves those means to produce their own results*, while he rests from his labours." The places, where this doctrine is taught, there are dry bones, and

there are speaking—and exhorting prophets, but seldom is the life-producing power of the Spirit felt, and infrequent are the stirrings of new life seen. The Spirit will work, and none shall entirely prevent and exclude his operations; as though by his doings he would repeat what he has said in his word, “Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” The deity of Christ may be taught, and the efficacy of his atonement inculcated,—and these are grand and important doctrines; yet Christ is indirectly dishonoured, when the Holy Spirit, whose office is to glorify Christ, is excluded from having any special and direct work in the conversion of each individual sinner. The glory of Christ is entrusted to the Spirit, and that he secures by bringing sinners to believe in Christ, while he takes the fruits of the Saviour’s mediation, and applies them to the heart; “for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

·III. *The Spirit glorifies Christ in the formation and maturity of Christian character.* That character is composed of different elements beautifully combined. Those elements are what are usually called the graces of the Spirit, such as Faith, Hope, Love, Joy, Peace, and Goodness. While these are invariably recognised in the word of God as “*the fruits of the Spirit*,”—the exercise of every one of them has a direct reference to Christ. Faith seems to have been wrought in the

heart, expressly for this purpose, that it might be the powerful, though invisible bond, which made the soul one with Christ. This faith soon adds to itself energy and knowledge, as its daily exercise has a tendency to discover more of the grace, wisdom, and power of Christ. All spiritual vitality is sustained through this medium; "the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And in the immediate prospect of dissolution, it maintains a firm hold on Christ; "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

At times these graces are simultaneously called into exercise, and at all times they have a mutual influence; if one droop, the others become languid. The health and vigour of all, will be promoted by closer communion with Christ. Faith, love, and joy are seen clasping hands as they approach Christ, when the Christian realises the language of Peter, speaking of Christ, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Hope has no other anchorage but on Christ. He is its author, and the foundation on which it rests. So the apostle, under the influence of the Spirit, thought, when he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus,

who hath begotten us again unto a *lively hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for us, *who are kept by the power of God* through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

As all these graces are viewed as the productions of the Spirit's grace and power in the heart, and are ever directed to Christ for his glory, so their gradual developement and ultimate maturity are the result of the continued superintendence and grace of the Holy Spirit. For the same apostle, who writes, "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," also gives the assurance that "He that hath begun the good work within you will carry it on till the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." The Spirit keeps *the glory of Christ* in view in all the vicissitudes through which the Christian is called to pass. Are they in affliction? "as their afflictions abound, so their consolations in Christ abound also." Are they in circumstances where they apprehend want? They are assured, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Are they perplexed with undefinable cares and anxieties? Then they can rejoice in tribulation, that the power of Christ may rest upon them. Are they assailed by numerous and powerful adversaries? They contend in the

strength of Christ, and hope for conquest “through him who hath loved them.” Are they placed in peculiarly advantageous circumstances? Then each will say for himself, “For me to live is Christ;” his law my rule, his life my pattern, his love my motive, and his glory my aim. Are they in the prospect of death? They can sing of “victory through Jesus Christ their Lord.” Are they looking forward to judgment? they then anticipate being presented complete in him. Are they anticipating the joys of heaven? All their views of heavenly joy are absorbed in their being for ever with, and like Christ. These states of mind are all under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, and are part of his discipline, preparatory to the ultimate result, when he shall present them faultless before the throne of the Divine glory,—finished likenesses of Christ; so that when they pass into eternity, they may hear the delightful decision, “He that is holy, let him be holy still.”

IV. *The Spirit glorifies Christ in the gratitude of earth, and in the praises of heaven.* Who can imagine what will be the triumphs of the Spirit, when the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of Christ, as the waters cover the sea,—when the earth shall become as one vast temple, and all its inhabitants sincere and ardent worshippers of Christ? Yea, when all that has been predicted of the glory of Christ’s kingdom

shall be fully accomplished ? Then every knee to him shall bow, and to him every tongue confess that "He is Lord of all." While one view of the moral state of the world might induce a feeble faith to say, "Can these things ever be ?" yet another view of what has been accomplished will furnish ample reason for a stronger faith to look upon the recent successes of the Gospel, as wave-offerings presented to the Lord, as pledges of the harvest of the world,—preludes of the time, when the earth, and the fulness thereof, shall be the Lord's. These anticipations are indulged, not in dependence on any instrumentality, but in reliance on that Spirit who has engaged to glorify Christ. And because the Spirit has entered into this engagement, therefore should the servants of Christ be stimulated to convey the Gospel to every clime,—to multiply the means he is accustomed to bless,—to make the most costly offerings to the cause of the Redeemer,—to importune the Spirit to pour out his promised blessing, and thus to prove him herewith, until he shall open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, so that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Then shall the chorus of earth unite with that of heaven in singing, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Even at present we are indulged with seeing the dawn of this blissful crisis ; even now our round earth, as it turns

to the sun, constantly presents to his beams some temples and numerous families where Jesus' name is praised,—communities and domestic circles of devout piety, where the Spirit's power and grace have been displayed. These facts are the encouragement, while the Spirit's own engagement is the ground for expecting greater things than earth has ever witnessed, or imagination adequately conceived,—the world surrendered to Christ.

To know the full extent of the Spirit's work in glorifying Christ, we must enter heaven, and see it peopled with the children of men, redeemed by the blood of Christ, bearing his image and celebrating his praise. There in the world all bright with purity, and joyous with exalted and eternal bliss, shall souls, made star-bright in holiness, sing "unto him who hath bought us with his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, to him be glory and honour, dominion and power, for ever and ever, Amen." And if, there, souls converse with each other, the wonders of redeeming grace will be their theme,—one soul will tell another of the eternal love of the Father,—of the compassion and death of Christ, and of the love and forbearance of the Spirit,—how that love and forbearance were displayed through all the changes of Christian experience, from the beginning to the con-

summation,—and pointing to some of the earliest of his operations on the heart, shall say,

“ HE taught my soul to pray,
And made mine eyes o’erflow ;
’Twas HE who kept me to this day,
And would not let me go.”

In reference to Christ, his glorification in bringing souls to him, as the fruit of his sufferings, and the reward of his pains, has been the aim and end of the Spirit’s operations ; while in reference to man, the Spirit has been tuning his heart for the melody of heaven.

How calculated is this subject to sustain the mind and heart that thinks, and feels, and devises for the promotion of the glory of Christ ! The humblest labourer in the Lord’s vineyard may, amidst the greatest discouragements, cheer up and persevere under this consideration, “ The very object I have in view, in all my efforts, poor and defective as they are, is to glorify Christ, and in this object I am assured of the co-operation of the Holy Spirit,—and I will importunately seek his aid yet more and more, since Jesus has said, ‘ *He shall glorify me.* ’ ”

SECTION III.

A PERISHING WORLD WAITING FOR THE REVIVING SPIRIT.

“The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together even until now.”

PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

“Until the Spirit be poured out from on high.”

ISAIAH.

THE moral state of the world is a monument that perpetuates the memory of the first transgression, and illustrates the mighty influence of one human deed. God had made this earth a new province in his vast empire, which he designed to visit with some of the fulness of his own happiness; its intelligent inhabitants he made after his own image, and formed after his own likeness. All the elements of heaven were here; and the heaven of heavens would scarcely have been preferable, had not sin entered. It must ever remain a mystery that this evil thing should have come into being, amidst scenes of purity and light. It has flung its demon gloom and blight over every form of beauty,

—produced the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wastes at noon-day,—turned the very means of health and life into vehicles of disease and death, dried up the sources of enjoyment, inflicted a curse that reaches the inmost soul, and separated God from his intelligent and immortal creature, man. This earth is no longer to God a dwelling-place of delight and complacency. He visits it now as the scene for the exercise of his pity and compassion. And this he does as the result of the great mediatorial engagement. When the Psalmist speaks of Christ's ascension to heaven, as completing the work of substitution, he speaks of it as antecedent and preparatory to this object,—God dwelling with men: “Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, *that the Lord God might dwell among them.*” This language, uttered by the Spirit of prophecy, predicted a coming blessing, while at the same time it gave the most unequivocal indications of the painful fact, that God was not at home on our earth. The God of life withdrawn,—all the appearances of health and animation depart. There are some parts of our world where a moral Eden blooms, where life and purity reign,—where the whole scene seems to say, God is here. These are the oases, in a desert world; scenes of fertility and beauty surrounded by the offensive bog and dreary morass;—

scenes that we might imagine were parts of the pristine beauty, which had escaped the desolating curse that had fallen on the world. Though this is not the true state of the case; for the curse was upon *the earth*, and its desolating blight knew no limits. These spots of beauty and loveliness have been restored from the general barrenness, and are mementos of the skill and power to which they have yielded. Thus, in the moral world, there are among the human family, a few here and there renovated, enlivened, and adorned with the beauty of holiness,—“the living ones” among the sepulchres of the dead,—the monuments of the life-giving power of the Spirit, on each of which is inscribed, “The God of life is here.” These evidences and results of life-giving power, make more apparent the moral death which so extensively prevails, like youth distinguished for vigour and beauty treading the valley of dry bones. For while there is abundant cause for gratitude, that so many parts of our world have received the renewing and reviving grace of the Holy Spirit, yet the aggregate presents but a small portion restored, compared to the immense tracts of country, of island, and continent, where the people perish for lack of knowledge. And even in those nations and districts where the Gospel has been introduced, and churches have been formed, and appearances are on the whole pleasing, the proofs of its transform-

ing efficacy and power have been on a comparatively limited scale. Among those very nations which are said to be evangelised, there are to be found multitudes who have not yet been healed and saved. The plague-spot is not quite eradicated ; the virus of depravity has some strongholds. The mischief of the disease remains, and threatens to extend ; many fall under it, and perish eternally.

The subject of this section pre-supposes, **THAT THE WORLD IS IN A PERISHING CONDITION.** The moral statistics of the world furnish satisfactory evidence that upon the most favourable calculation, not more than one-sixth of the whole population has been brought to a profession of the Gospel. Our own country, of course, is included. If then it be taken as a specimen, and we may conclude it is a favourable one, and we subtract those who are avowedly infidel and indifferent, to say nothing of hypocrites and false professors, what an inconsiderably small fraction will be left, who may be classed among those who are Christians indeed,—who *live* a life of faith on the Son of God! Many know the truth in theory, but have not experienced its sanative efficacy. While it is acknowledged with thankfulness, that there is much good being done in some parts of our country, yea, very much of a cheering character, yet it must be lamented that the good is immensely disproportionate to the means employed.

The painful fact must not be concealed, that even *here* thousands, yea, tens of thousands, perish for lack of knowledge,—of that knowledge which is unto eternal life ; some the dupes of a fatal delusion, maintained by a system which naturally tends to exclude all anxious concern about vital godliness ; others the victims of a daring impiety, or a reckless inconsideration. If this, then, be the state of our own country, we may fairly suppose that other nations *professing* Christianity are not widely different. This view is confirmed by the returns which have been made, showing the proportion of those who attend *any* place of worship, and those who attend *none* ; and among the first class may be found some who never hear *the Gospel* as taught by Christ and his apostles, and among the latter many who ridicule and despise it.

If, then, upon an impartial examination, we must conclude, that souls are perishing even where the means of salvation are abundant, what must be the condition of those nations who have never heard the joyful sound of the Gospel of the grace of God ! Inspiration answers this question, “ Where there is no vision the people perish.” And *shall* they perish ? Who are *they* ? Every *heathen*, whatever may be the colour of his skin, or wherever the place of his birth. How vast the multitude ! From many statements which have been presented to the public, giving a

comparative view of the moral aspect of the world, the following has been selected, as appearing to have greater claims to accuracy than others ; though the result in most is very nearly the same. “ If the inhabitants of our globe be divided into *thirty* equal parts, it is calculated that *eighteen* of those parts are Pagan, *six* are Mohammedan, and *one* Jewish, leaving only a ratio of five to thirty who profess the Christian religion.” One-sixth only are professed Christians ; and of this small portion, many are trusting in the superstitions of the Papal hierarchy, or relying on the absurdities of the Greek church : including all these in the calculation to belong to *professed* Christians, it leaves the amazing number of *seven hundred and fifty millions* who have not received the Gospel ! How affecting the sight ! If angels, on their errands of love from world to world, look at the moral aspect of ours, often must they sigh over it, as one vast field where some enemy hath done mighty havoc, leaving many dying and many dead ; and knowing that the means of restoring life and soundness have been provided, they must wonder that these immortals are not healed. Even while you, dear reader, have been perusing this description of the heathen world, thousands have passed into eternity,—have perished eternally, because they have lived and died without hope and without Christ. Can it be matter of surprise, that the weight of

human guilt on the world, and all its direful result, should cause the whole creation to groan and travail in pain, longing for the expected, the promised deliverance? Such has been the condition of the world for centuries; but it is only of late, that Christians have been led to look at the painful fact, and feel their pity and compassion awakened at the sight. Though the church at its very formation, was constituted a *missionary* church, yet it is only within the last century that the spirit of missions has been stirred up to make exertions on a bold and enterprising scale. Souls of other lands were allowed to perish, without one effort being made by Protestant Christians in this country to rescue them from perdition. Pious Christians in private life were absorbed in their own enjoyment of religious privileges, and ministers were engaged in unravelling the mystic knots of theology, and both seemed to forget the spirit of Him, "who, when he saw the multitude, was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd;" and to be unmindful of *his* last command, who bade his disciples "go into *all the world* and preach the Gospel to every creature." Apostles understood the meaning, and promptly carried out the spirit of this injunction. They believed that the world was perishing, and that the Gospel of Christ alone could make known the healing, saving remedy.

Wherever they went, they saw men “dead in trespasses and in sins ;” and whether they visited the battalions of war-loving Rome, or the schools of classic Greece, or the hordes of the barbarous Asiatic, this was true of all, “and *there* they preached the Gospel.” And wherever this Gospel was successful, it was recognised by all as “a savour of life unto life” unto those who were ready to perish. In all the triumphs, apostles ascribed all the glory to the Spirit of God ; while from those triumphs they took courage, and became more and more persevering in preaching “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Alas for the world, that soon after the apostles were removed, the spirit of apostolic labours should have faded away ! It is, however, refreshing to the heart to know that the Holy Spirit, the author of their graces, their gifts, and their success, still lives,—that the resources of his grace and power are undiminished, and that he can raise up others whom he will send to make known the Lord of life to perishing sinners. And this is the ground of hope,

THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS ENGAGED TO POUR OUT HIS REVIVING AND SAVING INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD. This gracious engagement furnishes a motive to the most vigorous exertion, and constitutes the guarantee of success. The patriarch, the psalmist, and the prophet, however diversified the circumstances in which they were placed, agree in their testimony, that

the heart is brought immediately under a heavenly influence. Job says, "God maketh the heart soft ;" and David looking forward to the glories of the Messiah, when his converts should be in number, purity, and influence "as the dew of the morning,"—anticipated that scene as the result of divine agency—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The prophet Isaiah delighted to dwell upon the interesting topic : when he had gazed on the great desolation sin had occasioned, and portrayed the appalling scene in language that proved his own deep emotion,—he gladly caught the heavenly inspiration,—delighted dwelt on the mighty agency, and the unfolding beauty of a reviving and revived world. "*Until* the Spirit be poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field : and the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." The writings of Isaiah contain so much of Christ, that they might be imagined to be an early edition of the Gospel, for the accommodation of the believers that belonged to the ancient church. And there seems to be an inseparable union established between the doctrine of justification by the death of Christ, and of sanctification by his Spirit. It seems to

be appropriately beautiful that the prophet, who in vision lived with Christ through all his sufferings and humiliation,—that he should speak largely of that Spirit who was to glorify Christ. And this he does: “I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.” Vegetation in the country of the prophet, was more rapid than can be imagined by those who dwell in this chilly latitude; and this impressive allusion is intended to represent the number and vigour of Christ’s converts, and the rapidity of their appearance; hence the language that follows is exegetical of the former verse: “One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”

But other prophets have been made the media of the same glorious truth, that the Spirit of the Lord shall bring back life to a perishing world. Ezekiel stood and prophesied as he was commanded, and dry bones they had remained,—and Ezekiel might have prophesied until there had been no difference between the speaker and the audience, had not the Lord God the Spirit given him this message, “Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.” Here was the secret of power, the solution to the mystery, How did these

bones begin to live? Omnipotent influence exerted itself, is a satisfactory answer ; it directs to the only cause adequate to the result.

Other predictions might here be noticed, especially two by Zechariah,^a and another by Joel.^b In all the promises of the communication of the Holy Spirit, there are effects immediately consequent, which confirm his claim to all the glory. The most humble effort by the poor, the uneducated, the uninfluential among men, if it originate in purity of motive, and in hallowed alliance with the Spirit, will be productive of far more extensive and permanent good, than the exertions of the learned and the wealthy, should they have relied on the acuteness of their own reasoning, and not on the power of the Spirit, and trusted to their own influence to the neglect of that which cometh from above.

Upon this point the instructions of the Spirit are clearer and more copious. Christ promised concerning the Spirit, that he should convince *the world* of sin. The conversion of the world is entrusted to the Spirit, and the efforts Christians make for the glory of Christ, are the effects of his influence on their heart. The manner in which that work shall be accomplished, will be on a grander scale ; but in accordance with those facts

^a Zech. iv. 6 ; xii. 10.

^b Joel ii. 28.

of conversion, which he has already presented to the church, showing that his ordinary way of working is through the instrumentality of the word, as on the day of Pentecost, or directly, without any apparent instrumentality, as in the conversion of the dying thief, and in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus,—the latter, *miracles* of converting grace, because out of the ordinary manner of his working, and therefore not to be reckoned on as events of frequent occurrence ; the former supplying us with a correct pattern of his usual mode of procedure, and inviting us to co-operation ; but there is no instance on record in the sacred volume that will support the hypothesis, that the truth in its own inherent power, and without any antecedent or cotemporary action of the Spirit on the heart of the sinner, has produced conversion. The Spirit has nothing to add to his word, nor does his immediate influence on the heart imply any deficiency in the atonement of Christ, but it does imply that human nature is as depraved as the word of God represents it, and that that depravity manifests itself in an aversion to everything that is holy, an aversion which none but the Spirit can remove. And it is to the removal of that aversion that the Spirit's operations are specially directed. The necessity of the work of the Spirit does not imply a deficiency in the truth, or in the atonement of Christ, of which the influences of the Spirit are the fruits, nor does it imply

any material defectiveness in the mental powers of men ; but it does imply a sad moral disorder and confusion among those faculties. It is not so much that man *cannot* believe the Gospel, as that he *will not* believe it. Dr. Owen has clearly pointed out the condition of man, when he says, "The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all the faculties by sin. God created them all in perfect harmony and union. The mind and reason were in perfect subjection and subordination to God and his will. The will answered, in its choice of good, the discovery made of it by the mind ; the affections constantly and evenly followed the understanding and will. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul, and all the wheels of it. That being disturbed by sin, the rest of the faculties move cross and contrary one to another. The will chooseth not the good which the mind discovers ; the affections delight not in that which the will chooseth, but all jar and interfere, cross and rebel against each other. This we have got by our falling from God. Hence sometimes the will leads, the judgment follows ; yea, commonly the affections which should attend upon all, get the sovereignty, and draw the whole soul after them."^a

^a Should the reader wish to pursue this subject further, he may with advantage consult the Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. i. p. 133, and Dr. Owen's Works, vol. xiii. ch. 3.

All this shows the wisdom and grace of the Holy Spirit, in engaging to restore on the soul of man the lost image of God, to bring back *life* to the soul worthy of the name, since it is the Holy Spirit who alone can by his operations on the heart so subdue its evil dispositions, — and so enlighten the understanding, — that the harmony of holiness shall reign in the soul. This work he has already accomplished in the experience of men of different nations, and he has engaged to carry it out on a larger scale, *to bring the world* to the obedience of the Gospel. In anticipation of the final issue, the apostle said, that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until *now* :” as though he witnessed the first signs of deliverance, when inanimate creation should be rescued from those wicked purposes, to which it had been perverted by the various forms of human depravity. The Lord has made ample provision for the stability and extension of his own cause in the world, and it now rests with Christians to multiply means in every direction, for he has declared, that “as the rain and the snow descend from heaven, and return not thither, but water the earth, and cause it to bring forth and bud, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth ; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” The success, is his to command—

the means are ours to employ. We now advance to a third observation,

THAT THERE ARE MANY CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ENCOURAGE THE EXPECTATION THAT THE PROMISED BLESSING IS ABOUT TO BE BESTOWED. Among those circumstances, we may notice, First, *The spirit of activity and energy of the church for the conversion of the world.* To scarcely any section of the church, however small its number, and narrow its limits, can attention be directed, but there is discoverable a missionary spirit—associated with a spirit of emulation, to excel in zeal and liberality in the diffusion of the Gospel of Christ. In this connexion, sectarianism loses more than half its deformity. Men who agree in the cardinal truths of the Gospel, and widely differ in minor points, can now amicably and helpfully unite in efforts for extending the kingdom of Christ. Inactivity is treated as a crime and dreaded as an infectious disease. Activity is the law of living, and the evidence of sound health in the church. The church is showing that it is beginning to understand its own character and relation to the world as *a missionary church.* No religious denomination thinks that it accomplishes the design of its existence, if it do not occupy some position on the missionary arena. The only exception is, the denomination, that *cannot* tell perishing men of *an efficacious atonement.* With this exception, all who call them-

selves Christians, in some measure sympathise with the general movement. The spirit of missions, is the spirit,—the life of the church. This spirit, is the beauty that blends all the features and complexions of the church. In England and America, on the continent of Europe, or on the continent of India, among the islands of the Southern Pacific, or among those of the Caribbean Sea, there is this uniform characteristic,—a hallowed ambition, combined with an enterprising and inventive zeal for the diffusion of the Gospel of Christ. Each denomination has contributed its quota of exertion and influence towards the result ; while all, moved by the same Spirit, are enjoying an enhancement of hallowed delight. And if denominationalism gave an occasional impulse to each peculiar division of the church, and in some of their boldest schemes these divisions seemed to be wide apart, yet in their expecting and their seeking the blessing they are one,—their eyes and their prayers are directed to the same Holy Spirit, while before the throne they blend their most fervent supplications. If, when Elijah and his servant are alone on Carmel, the little cloud,—the harbinger of blessing, appears,—much more when all the tribes of the Christian Israel are engaged in the same acts of devotion, asking and looking for the blessing, may its bestowment be expected. And it is one of the most pleasing signs of the times that the activity of the

church is marked by a deeper tone of piety and more fervent prayer than at some late periods of its past history.

Secondly. *The great measure of success already granted.* During the past half-century more difficulties to the progress of the Gospel have been removed, than the most sanguine could have ventured to hope. During that period, the gift of tongues has again been bestowed upon the church, and has abided with it, in a permanent and available form. The jargon sounds of barbarous tribes, the mystic marks of idol worship, and fragments of rude monumental records, were the chaotic mass from which languages have been organised. Other languages that had an existence, but regarded as almost unattainable, have been acquired, and new facilities afforded to future students for their acquisition. Into languages, that fifty years since had no existence, and into others that were hard to be understood, have the sacred Scriptures been translated. And now the nations, that a short time ago, had no book, have in their own tongue, the wonderful book of God. These translations are *permanent* blessings, which generations yet unborn shall enjoy. " Henry Martyn, Morrison, Carey, Williams, and others, continue not by reason of

* The agents employed were from different sections of the church. H. Martyn belonged to the Episcopalians; Dr. Morrison and Williams to the Independents; and Dr. Carey to the Baptists. H. Martyn

death ; but the monuments of their labour remain in their own imperishable grandeur ; and these the rude hand of violence, and the corroding tooth of time cannot destroy. “ All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field ; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

Yet while this preparatory process has been going on, by which an instrumentality of the most efficient character might be prepared, the ultimate results of missionary effort have been accomplished. Men of the most savage and barbarous tribes have been converted and made the meek and peaceful subjects of Christ's kingdom,—have been banded together in hallowed fellowship, to celebrate Divine ordinances, have been taught and trained in the school of the Spirit, and translated to the kingdom of glory. The Christian father dying in the midst of a circle of affectionate children, which had been spared by the power of the Gospel—and Rasalama, the martyr of Madagascar, and a goodly number of others, gave satisfactory evidence that they were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The churches among the heathen have become centres of missionary operations, whence have

translated the New Testament into the Persian language, Dr. Morrison translated the whole Bible into Chinese, Williams into the Tahitian, and Dr. Carey into *several* languages of India.

emanated light and influence to all around, and have displayed a liberality enriching the treasury of the societies of this country; thus giving back, to the very source whence they had received; the beneficiaries have become benefactors, the idols have been destroyed, the temples have been forsaken, the priests confounded,—the demon spell of superstition has been broken, and souls emancipated from a thralldom, under which they were perishing, have bounded into liberty, joy, and salvation.

Thirdly. *The present moral aspect of the world*, must be viewed as highly encouraging. While the fact exists that more than five-sixths of the human family are destitute of a saving knowledge of the Gospel, it will furnish abundant cause for the continued sympathy, prayers, and liberal efforts of the genuine Christian. Yet the scene is not without many cheering preludes of coming brightness. *The readiness of the nations to receive the truth.* Caste, that, like an adamantine band, held India's millions in the most abject bondage, has been burst into a thousand pieces. And now there, the difficulty is not, *Where* shall we have access to the people? but, How shall we send a *sufficient number* of labourers into the immense field?

At one time, when the missionary visited the precincts of China, his entrance was forbidden, as by a mountain barrier, environing the whole empire. He

stood and gazed at the affecting scene, his heart yearning with pity for the unnumbered multitude,—knowing that within the vast enclosure, souls were perishing, that he has in his care the means of their salvation, yet that they must perish, simply because no hand was permitted to give them the bread of eternal life,—his spirit has sunk under the gloom of hopelessness, while he exclaimed, in the language of Vilignano, of the sixteenth century, “O rock! O rock! when wilt thou open!” The rock has opened. The God of Israel has smitten it. The impassable mountain range that frowned defiance has divided. Jehovah has gone forth in the mysterious arrangements of his providence, saying, “Every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be made low, the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and *the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.*” The openings are wide; God is pointing the attention of his church to them, and saying, “Enter ye and take possession in the name of the Lord.” Other wide and extensive spheres for preaching Christ, have opened. Rude and barbarous nations ask for the heralds of salvation, and make offer of costly gifts as the price of their being sent.

The present drooping state of all the false systems of religion must be viewed as another pleasing sign of the coming blessing. The refined systems of ancient paganism,—systems to which poetry and all the fine

arts contributed to delight the senses, and enchant the hearts of the devotees ; these systems have passed away. The Delphian oracle is silent. The temple of the Sun is demolished. The priests of Jupiter, with gorgeous robes, and cymbal song, are no more. The bard of the groves, and stone altars of ancient Britons, have gone into oblivion ; except so much of record or monument remains as may just be sufficient to satisfy the diligent inquirer, they once were, and now are not. Moham-medanism and Buddhism, the demon spells of the East, are wearing the marks of feebleness and decrepitude. The barbarous rites of a rude and unorganised heathenism, are gradually sinking into oblivion under the mild and gentle influence of the Gospel.

The growing attention paid to the religious education of the young throughout the world, is a sign calculated to awaken the most pleasurable feeling in the heart of the man, who longs for the time when the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. In every sphere of ministerial or missionary labour, the instruction of the rising generation, is considered as a department, deserving the closest attention. A religious community, that does not, in a greater or less degree, take a deep interest, in some way, for the furtherance of this object, is considered an anomaly in the church of Christ. In foreign lands, this object occupies a large portion of the attention of some, and

absorbs all the time and energy of other missionaries. In Canton and in Calcutta, the schools wear a very promising aspect. And from the schools in India have many souls passed to the realms of glory, while many others have been trained for usefulness in their native land. Eternity alone can unfold the happy results of educational efforts in heathen lands.

The continued accession to the number, and the augmented efficiency of native agency. And the value of such an agency cannot be correctly estimated. It far exceeds what is its apparent worth. To provide such an agency, is itself an important object. James Douglas of Cavers, says, "The grand object of every society must be to train up native preachers; and they who best accomplish this, have best discharged the work assigned to them." And to these circumstances may be added the interesting fact, *That the sacred Scriptures are now translated into one hundred and thirty-seven languages*; and this work has been chiefly accomplished by Britannie Christian liberality. The churches of America, and those of the continent of Europe, have contributed a large portion of zeal and talent towards this important object. These translations form a noiseless but effective apparatus working and producing happy results, which only future ages shall fully unfold.

These encouraging circumstances are not to be regarded as isolated facts which have necessarily arisen

out of the general movement of the times ; but must be viewed as the results of infinite wisdom and arrangement, to which Elihu's exposition of the ways of God, is applicable in the most comprehensive sense, "Lo all these things worketh God continually with man, to bring back his soul from destruction, to enlighten him with the light of the living."

In bringing this section to a close, it may be observed, THAT THE ENCOURAGING SIGNS OF THE PROMISED AND APPROACHING BLESSING SHOULD STIMULATE TO MORE VIGOROUS EXERTIONS AND MORE FERVENT PRAYERS. Efforts have been made, prayers have been offered and answered, and events have been put into motion which cannot stop. The wilderness has begun to gladden, and the solitary place has begun to rejoice : Ethiopia has stretched out her hands unto God ; India has felt the beginning of her emancipation from idolatrous superstition ; China, the land of Sinim, has welcomed to her many millions the everlasting Gospel ; the dark and ice-bound regions of the north have felt the happy influence of an unsetting sun ; the islands of the sea have here and there become resting-places for the ark of God,—recipients of the Divine blessing. A taste of heaven has been granted, a longing, a panting after God have been produced. These are the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes. His has been the power, and his shall be the praise. Human instru-

mentality has been employed, and honoured. And is this the time to stand still? Inactivity is now perilous, and retreat ruinous. Is this the time in any degree to relax our efforts? Just as the victory is about to be determined, just as the loud pæan of triumph is about to burst upon the world, shall we begin to think only of ease? Every fact in the moral world says, Onward! The voice of God says, Onward! All the sympathies of our renewed nature cry, Onward! Wealth, honour, influence, and talent hear the voice, and in hallowed alliance with devotion, step forward and come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The struggle may be severe, though the conflict will be short. The church has yet to learn the extent of her influence on the world. The full consciousness of her strength has not yet come upon her. The activities of her wakefulness are but beginning to put themselves forth. A faith more vigorous,—a liberality more enlarged and uniform,—a more enterprising and enlightened zeal, and a devotion more heavenly, must and will shake off that *selfism*, which has been like an incubus on her noblest energies. The revival of the church shall usher in the salvation of the world. It becomes the church to put herself in the posture of prayerful expectation, that the desolations of Zion may be repaired, and that the waste places thereof may be fertilised.

More fervent prayer will be the result of faith in the

promise of the Spirit. If faith gather strength from the encouraging signs afforded, prayer will be earnest and importunate. If faith be weak, prayer becomes feeble and fitful. And yet the bright harbinger of the full outpouring of the Spirit,—the manifestation of Christ's glory, is the church laying hold on God by fervent prayer. "Prayer shall be made for him continually;" so the Spirit of prophecy declared, and then, "daily shall he be praised." Prayer is most appropriate in connexion with this subject; it is an acknowledgment of man's weakness,—it is the union of human instrumentality with the arm of Omnipotence. Supplications for the outpouring of the Spirit,—for the surrender of the world to Christ,—are according to the will of God, because they are the blessings he has promised. The promise of God is perverted, when it is adduced as an apology for exertion, or as a reason for restraining prayer. For when the Lord said, "Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock."

When the disciples held their last interview with Christ just before his ascension, they heard the promise of the Spirit accompanied with this special injunction,

“Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” This special injunction, marking with certainty the place where the promise should be accomplished, did not paralyse their devotion, but gave fervour to their prayers. And for ten successive days, did the Christian church, in its associated capacity, for the first time, hold a continuous prayer-meeting. Oh for the Spirit of prayer again to be poured out on the church ! and a day, far exceeding the glory of Pentecost, would gladden the world ; for not to one locality would its brightness be confined ; but every part of our globe would be radiated with heavenly light. The nations of the earth would then cease to be deserts of barrenness, and dens of ravenous beasts,—the Spirit being “poured out from on high.” The wide-spreading cloud appears, the hand of prayer can reach it, and make it burst with blessings on a sinful world. It waits to be touched by prayer, while God says, “Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

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