

Concerning Religious Affections

Jonathan Edwards



CONCERNING RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

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ABOUT THIS BOOK



A landmark work of Puritan theology, this treatise investigates a vital question: **how can genuine spiritual experience be distinguished from mere enthusiasm or self-deception?** Writing amid the revivals of the Great Awakening, Edwards argues that **true religion consists largely in holy affections** — not empty emotions, but deep movements of the heart rooted in divine truth. He identifies twelve signs that neither confirm nor deny authentic faith, then presents twelve **distinguishing marks** of truly gracious affections. A penetrating guide to spiritual self-examination that remains deeply relevant today.



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TITLE PAGE



A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, in Three Parts;
Part 1. Concerning the nature of the affections, and their importance in religion.

Part 2. Showing what are no certain signs that religious affections are gracious, or that they are not.

Part 3. Showing what are distinguishing signs of truly gracious and holy affections.

By Jonathan Edwards, Master of Arts and Pastor of the First Church in Northampton.

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Song of Solomon 2:12, 13. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and

the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Verse 15. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, which spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.

Boston: Printed for S. Kneeland and T. Green in Queen Street, over against the Prison. 1746.

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THE PREFACE



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It happened during the great outpouring of the Spirit on the Jews in the days of John the Baptist, as seen in the rapid apostasy of that people after such a widespread awakening, and in the temporary religious feelings and joys of many (John 5:35): 'You were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.' It happened amid the great stirrings among the multitudes caused by Jesus Christ's preaching: of the many who were called, few were chosen; of the crowds roused and moved by His preaching — who at one time or another seemed deeply engaged, full of wonder at Christ and elevated with joy — few were true disciples who stood the test of the great trials that came afterward and endured to the end. Many were like the rocky soil or thorny ground, and only a few were like the good soil. Of the whole harvest gathered, a great portion was chaff that the wind afterward drove away, and the remaining wheat was comparatively small — as the history of the New Testament abundantly shows. This also happened during the great outpouring of the Spirit in the apostles' days, as Matthew 24:10-13, Galatians 3:1 and 4:11, 15, Philippians 2:21 and 3:18-19, the two letters to the Corinthians, and many other parts of the New Testament make clear. And so it was in the great Reformation from Catholicism. It has plainly been the pattern in the visible Church of God during great revivals of religion throughout history: it is like fruit trees in spring — a multitude of blossoms appear, all looking fair and beautiful, with a promising show of young fruit; but many last only a short time, fall off quickly, and never come to maturity.

This pattern is not how things will always be. Though this world will never see complete purity — either in individual believers, who will always have some mixture of remaining sin, or in the

Church of God, which will always have some mixture of hypocrites alongside true believers — it is clear from Scripture that a time of far greater purity is coming to the Church of God, greater than anything seen in ages past. This is plain from the following passages: Isaiah 52:1; Ezekiel 44:6, 7, 9; Joel 3:17; Zechariah 14:21; Psalm 69:32, 35, 36; Isaiah 35:8, 10; Isaiah 4:3, 4; Ezekiel 20:38; Psalm 37:9, 10, 11, 29. One great reason for this purification will be that God will give His people far greater ability to distinguish true religion from its counterfeits, as Malachi 3:3 shows: 'And He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.' The following verse (Malachi 3:18) continues the prophecy of the same blessed future: 'Then you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.'

It is the mixture of counterfeit religion with true religion — when the two are not distinguished — that has given the devil his greatest advantage against the cause and kingdom of Christ throughout history. This is plainly the chief means by which he has prevailed against every revival of religion since the founding of the Christian church. By this means he did more damage to Christianity during and after the apostolic age than all the persecutions by both Jews and pagans combined. The apostles, in all their letters, show far more concern about the former threat than the latter. By this means Satan did ten times more to stop the progress of the Reformation begun by Luther, Zwingli, and others, and to bring it into disgrace, than all the bloody, cruel, and unprecedented persecutions of the Church of Rome. By this means he has

prevailed against revivals of religion in our own nation since the Reformation. By this means he prevailed against New England, quenching the love and spoiling the joy of her early days of devotion about a hundred years ago. And I have had ample opportunity to see clearly how, by this same means, the devil prevailed against the recent great revival of religion in New England — so happy and promising at its beginning. This has plainly been his main advantage over us; by this he has defeated us. It is by this means that the daughter of Zion in this land now lies on the ground in the pitiful condition we now see — her garments torn, her face disfigured, her nakedness exposed, her limbs broken, writhing in the blood of her own wounds, utterly unable to rise — and this so soon after her recent great joys and hopes. As Lamentations 1:17 says: 'Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her; the Lord has commanded concerning Jacob that his adversaries should surround him; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.' I have watched the devil prevail this same way against two great revivals of religion in this country. Satan deals with mankind exactly as he began — he prevailed against our first parents and cast them out of Paradise, suddenly bringing all their happiness and glory to an end, by appearing to be a friend to their blessed state and pretending to advance it to higher degrees. So the same crafty serpent who deceived Eve through his cunning has, by turning us aside from the simplicity that is in Christ, suddenly prevailed to strip us of the bright prospect we had a little while ago of a paradise-like state for the Church of God in New England.

When religion has revived in the Church of God and enemies appear, those who are engaged in defending its cause are most vulnerable precisely where they are least aware of the danger. While they are focused entirely on the opposition that appears openly in front of them — rallying against that threat — they neglect to look carefully all around them. At that moment the devil comes from behind and delivers a fatal blow unseen. He has the opportunity to strike more directly and wound more deeply because he attacks at his leisure and entirely on his own terms, with no guard or resistance to stop him.

This pattern will likely continue in the Church whenever religion revives noticeably, until we have learned to distinguish well between true and false religion — between saving affections and experiences, and the many impressive appearances and glittering shows that counterfeit them. When these are not distinguished, the consequences are often unspeakably dreadful. By this means the devil satisfies himself by bringing it about that what is offered to God by multitudes, under the notion of a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice, is in fact what God finds most abominable. By this means he deceives great multitudes about the state of their souls — making them think they are something when they are nothing — and so destroys them eternally. Not only that, but he also confirms many in strong confidence of their outstanding holiness who are, in God's sight, among the vilest of hypocrites. By this means he damages and wounds religion in the hearts of true believers in many ways — obscuring and corrupting it with impure mixtures, causing their religious affections to deteriorate terribly, and sometimes for a long period to become like the manna that bred worms and stank. He also dreadfully ensnares and confuses the minds of

other believers, driving them into great difficulties and temptations and tangling them in a wilderness from which they cannot find their way out. By this means Satan powerfully encourages the hearts of open enemies of religion, strengthens their hands, fills them with weapons, and reinforces their strongholds — while at the same time religion and the Church of God are exposed to those enemies like a city without walls. By this means he brings it about that people commit wickedness thinking they are doing God's service, and so they sin without restraint, with earnest zeal and with all their might. By this means he leads even friends of religion, without their realizing it, to do the work of enemies by destroying religion far more effectively than open enemies could — all while believing they are advancing it. By this means the devil scatters Christ's flock and turns members against one another with intense passion, all done under the banner of zeal for God. Religion then gradually degenerates into empty quarreling, and during the strife Satan leads both parties far from the right path — driving each to opposite extremes, one to the right and the other to the left, according to where he finds them most inclined or most easily swayed — until the true middle path is almost entirely abandoned. In the midst of this confusion the devil has great opportunity to advance his own interests in countless ways, seize control of everything, and do exactly as he wishes. And when people see the terrible consequences of this counterfeit religion — when it is not distinguished from true religion — God's people in general have their minds shaken and destabilized in matters of religion, not knowing where to stand, what to think, or what to do. Many are driven to doubt whether there is anything real in religion at all, and heresy, unbelief, and atheism spread widely.

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PART 1



PART 1.

In these words, the apostle describes the inner state of the Christians he was writing to, who were enduring persecution at the time. These persecutions are what he refers to in the two preceding verses, when he speaks of the trial of their faith and of their being in sorrow through various trials.

Such trials benefit true religion in three ways. First, they reveal its truth — they make it apparent that the faith is genuine. More than anything else, trials tend to distinguish between true religion and false, and to make that difference clearly visible. This is why they are called trials in the preceding verse and throughout Scripture — they test the faith and religion of those who profess it, just as gold is tested in fire to prove whether it is genuine. When the faith of true Christians is tested and proved genuine, it is found to result in praise, honor, and glory, as that preceding verse shows.

Second, these trials benefit true religion not only by revealing its truth but also by making its genuine beauty and excellence stand out. True virtue never appears more attractive than when it is most oppressed, and the divine excellence of authentic Christianity is never displayed to better advantage than under the

greatest trials. It is then that true faith appears far more precious than gold, and for this reason is found to result in praise, honor, and glory.

Third, such trials benefit true religion by purifying and increasing it. They not only prove it to be true, but also refine it — stripping away the false elements that burden and hinder it, so that only what is genuine remains. They cause the beauty of true religion to appear to its best advantage, as noted above, and beyond that they actually increase that beauty by establishing and strengthening it, making it more lively and vigorous, and purifying it from the things that had obscured its brightness and glory. Just as gold tested in fire is purged of all impurities and dross and comes forth more solid and beautiful, so true faith tested in this way becomes more precious — and is thus also found to result in praise, honor, and glory. The apostle seems to have all three of these benefits of persecution in mind in the verse preceding the passage.

In this passage, the apostle describes how true religion was working in the Christians he wrote to during their persecutions — and through this operation, these benefits of persecution became visible in them. He is showing what kind of operation of true religion it was that, under persecution, proved their religion to be genuine, displayed its beauty and excellence in a striking way, and also showed it to be growing and being purified — so that it was on track to be found unto praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. There were two kinds of operation — two exercises of true religion — in them under their sufferings, through which these benefits appeared, and which the apostle notes in this passage.

First, love to Christ: 'Whom having not seen, you love.' The world was ready to wonder what strange principle drove these believers to expose themselves to such great suffering — forsaking visible things and renouncing everything that was dear and pleasant to the senses. To the people around them, they seemed to be out of their minds, acting as though they hated themselves. From the world's perspective, there was nothing that could account for such suffering or sustain them through it. But although there was nothing visible — nothing that the world saw, or that the Christians themselves had ever seen with their own eyes — that drove and sustained them, they had a supernatural principle of love for something unseen. They loved Jesus Christ, for they saw Him spiritually in a way the world could not, and in a way they had never seen Him with their physical eyes.

Second, joy in Christ. Though their outward sufferings were very severe, their inward spiritual joy was greater than their sufferings, and that joy sustained them and enabled them to suffer with cheerfulness.

The apostle notes two things about this joy. First, the way it arises — the way that Christ, though unseen, is its foundation, namely through faith, which is the evidence of things not seen: 'in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice.' Second, the nature of this joy: 'inexpressible and full of glory.' It was inexpressible in its kind — very different from worldly joys and physical pleasures, of a far purer, more elevated, and more heavenly nature, being something supernatural and truly divine, so exquisitely excellent that no words could describe it. It was also inexpressible in degree, as God pleased to give them this holy joy abundantly and in great measure in their season of persecution.

Their joy was full of glory. Although the joy was inexpressible and no words could fully describe it, something could be said — and no words more fittingly captured its excellence than 'full of glory,' or as the original has it, 'glorified joy.' In rejoicing with this joy, their minds were filled with a kind of glorious brightness, and their very natures were elevated and ennobled. It was a most worthy and noble rejoicing that did not corrupt or degrade the mind as many carnal joys do, but greatly beautified and dignified it. It was a foretaste of the joy of heaven that lifted their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness. It filled their minds with the light of God's glory and caused them to shine with some measure of that glory reflected back.

From these words I draw the following proposition, or doctrine:

Doctrine: True religion consists, in great part, in holy affections.

Notice that when the apostle observes the operations and exercises of religion in the Christians he wrote to — when their religion appeared most genuinely true under the greatest trials, being tested like gold in fire — and when their religion not only proved true but was purified of all impurities and false mixtures, and when religion appeared in them most fully in its proper excellence and native beauty, found to result in praise, honor, and glory — it is the religious affections of love and joy that he singles out as then being in exercise in them. These are the specific exercises of religion he points to as proving their faith to be true and pure and in its proper glory.

Here I would do two things.

First, explain what is meant by the affections.

Second, note some things that make it evident that a great part of true religion lies in the affections.

First, what are the affections of the mind?

The affections are simply the more vigorous and strongly felt exercises of the inclination and will of the soul.

God has endowed the soul with two faculties. One is the capacity for perception and understanding — the faculty by which the soul discerns, views, and judges things. This is called the understanding. The other faculty is the one by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is moved toward or away from them — drawn to them or pushed away from them. Rather than observing things as a detached, unaffected spectator, the soul through this faculty responds to things with liking or disliking, pleasure or displeasure, approval or rejection. This faculty is called by various names. Considered in itself, it is called the inclination. Considered in relation to the actions it determines and governs, it is called the will. And the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the heart.

The exercises of this faculty fall into two kinds: those by which the soul moves toward the things it perceives — approving them, taking pleasure in them, and being drawn to them — and those by which the soul opposes the things it perceives — disapproving them, being displeased with them, pulling away from them, and rejecting them.

The exercises of the inclination and will vary greatly not only in their kinds but even more so in their degrees. Some exercises of pleasure or displeasure, inclination or disinclination, carry the soul

only a little beyond a state of perfect indifference. Above this there are higher degrees — stronger approval or dislike, stronger pleasure or aversion — and these can rise higher and higher until the soul acts vigorously and with strong feeling. At that point the actings of the soul are so intense that, through the laws governing the union of soul and body that the Creator has established, the motion of the blood and the body's vital spirits begins to be noticeably altered. This often produces some physical sensation, especially around the heart and the vital organs, which are the source of the body's fluids. It is for this reason that the mind — with regard to the exercises of this faculty — has been called the heart, apparently in all nations and throughout all ages. It should be noted that it is these more vigorous and strongly felt exercises of this faculty that are called the affections.

The will and the affections of the soul are not two separate faculties. The affections are not essentially distinct from the will, and they do not differ from the simple actings of the will and inclination of the soul — they differ only in the intensity and strength of the exercise.

It must be admitted that language is somewhat imprecise here, and the meaning of words in this area is somewhat loose and undefined, since language is governed by common usage rather than precise definition. In one sense, the affection of the soul differs not at all from the will and inclination — the will is never exercised at all except to the extent that it is affected; it is not moved out of a state of perfect indifference except as it is affected one way or another, and it acts voluntarily only to that extent. Yet there are many actings of the will and inclination that are not commonly called affections. In everything we do voluntarily, there is an exer-

cise of the will and inclination — our inclination governs our actions — but not all the actings of the inclination and will in the ordinary actions of daily life are typically called affections. Yet what are commonly called affections are not essentially different from those ordinary actings — they differ only in degree and manner of exercise. In every act of the will, the soul either likes or dislikes, is inclined or disinclined toward what is in view. These are not essentially different from the affections of love and hatred. When the soul's liking or inclination toward something is strong, vigorous, and lively, it is the very same thing as the affection of love. And when the soul's disliking and disinclination is strong, it is the very same thing as hatred. In every act of the will toward something not yet present, the soul is inclined to some degree toward that thing — and when that inclination is considerable, it is the very same as the affection of desire. In every degree of the will's act of approving something present, there is a degree of pleasure — and when that pleasure is considerable, it is the very same as the affection of joy or delight. And when the will disapproves of something present, the soul is displeased to some degree — and when that displeasure is great, it is the very same as the affection of grief or sorrow.

Such is our nature, and such are the laws governing the union of soul and body, that there is never any lively and vigorous exercise of the will or inclination of the soul without some effect on the body — some change in the motion of its fluids, and especially of the vital spirits. Conversely, by those same laws of the union of soul and body, the condition of the body and the motion of its fluids can also promote the exercise of the affections. Yet the body is not the proper seat of the affections — only the mind is. The human body is no more capable of genuinely experiencing love or ha-

tred, joy or sorrow, fear or hope, than the body of a tree is — or than the body itself is capable of thinking and understanding. Just as it is the soul alone that has ideas, so it is the soul alone that is pleased or displeased with its ideas. Just as it is the soul alone that thinks, so it is the soul alone that loves or hates, rejoices or grieves over what it thinks about. The physical motions of the vital spirits and bodily fluids do not properly belong to the nature of the affections, even though they always accompany them in our present state. They are only effects or accompaniments of the affections that are entirely distinct from the affections themselves and not essential to them — so that a disembodied spirit would be just as capable of love and hatred, joy or sorrow, hope or fear, or other affections as one united to a body.

Affections and passions are frequently used as synonyms, yet in common usage there is a distinction. Affection is the broader term, used for all vigorous and lively actings of the will or inclination, while passion refers more specifically to those that are more sudden, whose physical effects are more violent, and in which the mind is more overpowered and less in control of itself.

Just as all the exercises of the inclination and will involve either approving and liking or disapproving and rejecting, so the affections are of two kinds: those by which the soul moves toward what it perceives — cleaving to it or seeking it — and those by which the soul pulls away from it and opposes it.

The affections of the first kind include love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, and satisfaction. The affections of the second kind include hatred, fear, anger, grief, and others like them, which need not be defined individually here.

Some affections are a blend of both kinds of will-actings. Pity, for example, contains something of the first kind toward the person who is suffering, and something of the second kind toward what that person is suffering. Similarly, zeal involves strong approval of some person or thing, along with vigorous opposition to whatever is seen as contrary to it.

There are other mixed affections that could be mentioned, but I will move on to the

second thing proposed: to note some things that make it evident that true religion consists, in great part, in the affections. And here,

First, what has already been said about the nature of the affections makes this evident on its own, and should be sufficient to settle the matter without anything further. For who would deny that true religion consists, in large measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul — in the fervent exercises of the heart?

The religion that God requires and will accept does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes that raise us only slightly above indifference. God's Word insists emphatically that we be in earnest — fervent in spirit — with our hearts vigorously engaged in religion (Romans 12:11): 'Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Deuteronomy 10:12: 'And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul?' And Deuteronomy 6:4-5: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and

with all your might.' It is this fervent, vigorous engagement of the heart in religion that is the fruit of true circumcision of the heart — that is, genuine regeneration — and that receives the promises of life (Deuteronomy 30:6): 'Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.'

If we are not genuinely earnest in religion and our wills and inclinations are not strongly engaged, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great that there can be no fitting response in the exercises of our hearts to their nature and importance unless those exercises are lively and powerful. In nothing is vigor of the inclination so necessary as in religion, and in nothing is lukewarmness so offensive. True religion is always a powerful thing, and its power shows itself first in the inward exercises of the heart, where its principal and original seat is. This is why true religion is called the power of godliness — in contrast to the external appearances of it, which are merely the form (2 Timothy 3:5): 'holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.' The Spirit of God in those who have genuine and solid religion is a Spirit of powerful holy affection, and therefore God is said to have given them 'a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind' (2 Timothy 1:7). Those who receive the Spirit of God in His sanctifying and saving influences are said to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire — because of the power and intensity of the exercises that the Spirit of God stirs up in their hearts, so that their hearts, when grace is active, may be said to burn within them, as was said of the disciples in Luke 24:32.

The work of religion is repeatedly compared in Scripture to activities in which people exert their hearts and strength to the fullest: running, wrestling or straining for a great prize or crown, fighting strong enemies who seek to take one's life, and waging war as those who take a city or kingdom by force.

Though true grace comes in various degrees, and there are some who are only babes in Christ — in whom the exercise of the inclination and will toward divine and heavenly things is comparatively weak — yet everyone who has the power of godliness in his heart has his inclinations and heart exercised toward God and divine things with such strength and intensity that these holy exercises prevail over all carnal or natural affections and are effective in overcoming them. For every true disciple of Christ loves Him more than father or mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, houses and lands — yes, even more than his own life. It follows from this that wherever true religion is found, there are vigorous exercises of the inclination and will toward divine objects. But as was shown above, the vigorous, lively, and strongly felt exercises of the will are nothing other than the affections of the soul.

Second, the Author of human nature has not only given affections to human beings but has made them the primary spring of human action. Just as affections not only necessarily belong to human nature but are a very great part of it, so — since by regeneration a person is renewed in the whole person and sanctified throughout — holy affections not only necessarily belong to true religion but are a very great part of it. And since true religion is practical in nature, and God has so constituted human nature that

the affections are very much the driving force behind human action, this also shows that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Human nature is such that people are largely inactive unless moved by some affection — love or hatred, desire, hope, fear, or some other. These affections are the driving forces that set people in motion in all the affairs of life and engage them in all their pursuits. They are what pushes people forward and carries them along in all their worldly endeavors, and especially what excites and energizes them in whatever they pursue earnestly and with vigor. We see that the world of humanity is extremely busy and active, and the affections of people are the engine of that motion. Remove all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all zeal and passionate desire, and the world would largely come to a standstill. There would be no such thing as human activity, no earnest pursuit of anything. Affection is what drives the greedy man in his pursuit of worldly profit; it is affection that propels the ambitious man in his chase of worldly glory; and it is affection that moves the pleasure-seeker in his pursuit of physical delights. The world has continued from age to age in a constant motion and restless activity in pursuit of these things — but remove all affection, and the spring of that motion would be gone, and the motion itself would stop. And just as worldly affections are very much the engine of human action in worldly matters, so in religious matters, religious affections are very much the engine of action. The person who has only doctrinal knowledge and intellectual understanding, without affection, is never genuinely engaged in the business of religion.

Third, the fact is plainly evident that the things of religion take hold of people's souls only to the extent that they affect them. Multitudes often hear the Word of God — hearing things that are infinitely great and important, that concern them most closely — and yet all that they hear seems entirely without effect, producing no change in their disposition or behavior. The reason is that they are not affected by what they hear. Many people regularly hear of the glorious perfections of God: His almighty power and boundless wisdom, His infinite majesty, His holiness that is too pure to look on evil and cannot tolerate iniquity, before whom even the heavens are not pure, and of God's infinite goodness and mercy. They hear of the great works of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, in which these perfections appear so wonderfully. They hear specifically of the unspeakable love of God and Christ, of the great things Christ has done and suffered, of the great realities of the world to come — of eternal misery in bearing the fierce wrath of almighty God, and of endless blessedness and glory in God's presence and the enjoyment of His love. They also hear God's plain commands and His gracious counsel and warnings and the warm invitations of the Gospel. Yet they hear all these things and remain as they were before, with no noticeable change either in heart or practice — because they are not affected by what they hear, and they never will be changed until they are affected. I am bold to assert that no significant change has ever been wrought in the mind or conduct of any person by anything of a religious nature — anything read, heard, or seen — without the affections being moved. No unregenerate person has ever been earnestly seeking his salvation, crying out for wisdom, lifting up his voice for understanding, and wrestling with God in prayer for mercy, without being affected. No

one has ever been humbled and brought to the foot of God by any sense of his own unworthiness and deserving of God's displeasure, nor has anyone ever been moved to flee to Christ for refuge, while the heart remained unaffected. Nor has any believer ever been awakened out of a cold and lifeless spiritual condition, or recovered from a declining state in religion and brought back from a grievous departure from God, without the heart being affected. In a word, nothing significant has ever been accomplished in the heart or life of any person by the things of religion without the heart being deeply affected by them.

Fourth, throughout the holy Scriptures, religion is placed very much in the affections — such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal.

Scripture places much of religion in godly fear — so much so that it is frequently used as the defining characteristic of those who are truly religious. They tremble at God's Word, they fear before Him, their flesh trembles in fear of Him, they are afraid of His judgments, His excellence makes them afraid, and His dread falls upon them. The common title given to the saints in Scripture is 'those who fear God' or 'those who fear the Lord.' Because the fear of God is such a large part of true godliness, true godliness in general is very commonly called simply 'the fear of God' — as everyone who knows the Bible at all well knows.

Hope in God and in the promises of His Word is also spoken of in Scripture as a very significant part of true religion. It is mentioned as one of the three great things of which religion consists (1 Corinthians 13:13). Hope in the Lord is frequently mentioned as a characteristic of the saints. Psalm 146:5: 'How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.'

Jeremiah 17:7: 'Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose trust is the Lord.' Psalm 31:24: 'Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord.' And there are many other similar passages. Religious fear and hope are also joined together more than once as jointly defining the character of true believers. Psalm 33:18: 'Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness.' Psalm 147:11: 'The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.' Hope is so great a part of true religion that the apostle says we are saved by hope (Romans 8:24). And hope is described as the helmet of the Christian soldier (1 Thessalonians 5:8): 'and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.' It is also the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul that keeps it from being driven off course by the storms of the evil world (Hebrews 6:19): 'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul' — a benefit that true believers receive through faith.

Scripture places religion very much in the affection of love — love for God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, love for God's people, and love for humanity in general. The texts that show this, in both the Old Testament and the New, are countless. More on this later.

The opposite affection — hatred — when directed toward sin, is also spoken of in Scripture as a significant part of true religion. It is presented as a mark by which true religion can be known and distinguished (Proverbs 8:13): 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.' Accordingly, the saints are called to demonstrate their sincerity by this (Psalm 97:10): 'Hate evil, you who love the Lord.' The psalmist mentions it as evidence of his own sincerity (Psalm 101:2-3): 'I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. I will set no

worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away.' Psalm 119:104: 'I hate every false way.' (See also verse 128.) Again, Psalm 139:21: 'Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord?'

Holy desire — expressed in longings, hungerings, and thirsting after God and holiness — is also frequently mentioned in Scripture as an important part of true religion. Isaiah 26:8: 'The desire of our souls is for Your name and the remembrance of You.' Psalm 27:4: 'One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.' Psalm 42:1-2: 'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?' Psalm 63:1-2: 'My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.' Psalm 84:1-2: 'How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.' Psalm 119:20: 'My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times.' See also Psalm 73:25; 143:6; 130:6; Song of Solomon 3:1-2 and 6:8. Such holy desire and thirsting of the soul is listed among the great things that mark a person as truly blessed, at the opening of Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:6): 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.' And this holy thirst is spoken of as an important condition for receiving the blessings of eternal life (Revelation 21:6): 'I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.'

Scripture speaks of holy joy as a great part of true religion. It is presented as such in the passage we are considering. As an important part of religion, it is frequently commanded and urged with great earnestness. Psalm 37:4: 'Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.' Psalm 97:12: 'Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones.' Psalm 33:1: 'Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones.' Matthew 5:12: 'Rejoice and be glad.' Philippians 3:1: 'Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.' Philippians 4:4: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.' 1 Thessalonians 5:16: 'Rejoice always.' Psalm 149:2: 'Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.' Joy is listed among the chief fruits of the Spirit of grace (Galatians 5:22): 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy...' The psalmist mentions his holy joy as evidence of his sincerity (Psalm 119:14): 'I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.'

Religious sorrow, mourning, and brokenness of heart are also frequently spoken of as a great part of true religion. These qualities are often listed as distinguishing marks of true believers and a major part of their character. Matthew 5:4: 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Psalm 34:18: 'The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.' Isaiah 61:1-2: 'The Lord has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to comfort all who mourn.' This godly sorrow and brokenness of heart is spoken of not only as a distinguishing mark of the saints but as something that is particularly acceptable and pleasing to God. Psalm 51:17: 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.' Isaiah 57:15: 'Thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name

is Holy: I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.' Isaiah 66:2: 'To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit.'

Another affection frequently mentioned as a significant expression of true religion is gratitude — especially as expressed in thankfulness and praise to God. This is spoken of so extensively in the Psalms and throughout Scripture that citing individual texts is unnecessary.

Scripture also frequently speaks of mercy as a very great and essential part of true religion — so much so that good people in Scripture are identified by this quality, and 'a merciful person' and 'a good person' are essentially equivalent terms. Isaiah 57:1: 'The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart; and devout men are taken away.' Scripture speaks of this quality as one that especially marks a person out. Psalm 37:21: 'The righteous is gracious and gives,' and verse 26: 'All day long he is gracious and lends.' Psalm 112:4: 'He is gracious and compassionate and righteous.' Colossians 3:12: 'Put on, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion...' Mercy is one of the great qualities that mark those who are truly blessed, as our Savior describes them (Matthew 5:7): 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.' Christ speaks of mercy as one of the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23): 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.' To the same effect is Micah 6:8: 'He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with

your God?' And also Hosea 6:6: 'For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice.' This appears to have been a text our Savior was especially fond of, given the way He cited it repeatedly in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7.

Zeal is also spoken of as a very essential part of the religion of true believers. It is mentioned as a great goal Christ had in view in giving Himself for our redemption (Titus 2:14): 'who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.' And the absence of zeal is identified as the great failing of the lukewarm Laodiceans in Revelation 3:15-16, 19.

I have cited only a few texts from the countless passages throughout Scripture that locate religion very much in the affections. But what has been shown should be sufficient to demonstrate that those who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections — and who maintain the contrary — must set aside what we have always recognized as our Bible and find some other standard by which to judge the nature of religion.

Fifth, Scripture represents true religion as summed up in love — the chief of all affections and the fountain from which all other affections flow.

This is how our blessed Savior presents the matter in answer to the lawyer who asked which commandment was the greatest. Matthew 22:37-40: 'Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' These words indicate that the two great commandments together contain all the duty and religion taught in the Law and the Prophets. The apostle Paul makes the same point repeatedly, as in

Romans 13:8: 'He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.' And in 1 Timothy 1:5: 'But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart...' The same apostle speaks of love as the greatest thing in religion — its very life, essence, and soul — without which the greatest knowledge and gifts, the most impressive religious profession, and everything else belonging to religion is empty and worthless. He presents love as the fountain from which everything good flows, in 1 Corinthians 13 throughout. The word translated 'charity' there is in the original the Greek word *agape*, which in English is simply love.

Now, while it is true that the love spoken of here includes the entire sincere disposition of the soul toward God and others, it is evident from what was observed above that when this disposition or inclination of the soul is in vigorous and strongly felt exercise, it becomes affection — it is nothing other than affectionate love. And surely it is this vigorous and fervent love that Christ speaks of as the sum of all religion, when He speaks of loving God with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds, and our neighbor as ourselves — as the sum of everything taught and commanded in the Law and the Prophets.

It should not be supposed, when this affection of love is spoken of here and in other scriptures as the sum of all religion, that this means only the outward act and not the inner habit, or that the exercise of the understanding is excluded — for all reasonable affection implies understanding. But it is undoubtedly true, and plain from these scriptures, that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love. And in this divine affection — together with a habitual

disposition toward it, the understanding that serves as its foundation, and the fruits that flow from it — consists the whole of religion.

From this it clearly and certainly follows that a great part of true religion consists in the affections. For love is not only one of the affections — it is the first and chief of all the affections, and the fountain from which all the others flow. From love arises hatred of the things that oppose what we love or that hinder us from what we delight in. And from the various exercises of love and hatred — depending on the nature and circumstances of their objects, whether present or absent, certain or uncertain, likely or unlikely — arise all the other affections: desire, fear, joy, gratitude, and so on. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love for God flow all the other religious affections — a fear of sin, joy in God when He is near and sensibly present, grief when He seems absent, joyful hope when a future enjoyment of God is anticipated, and fervent zeal for God's glory. In the same way, from a fervent love for others will arise all other virtuous affections toward them.

Sixth, the religion of the most outstanding believers we read of in Scripture consisted very much in holy affections.

I will take particular notice of three eminent believers who have expressed the frame and disposition of their own hearts — and so described their own religion and their manner of relating to God — in their writings that are preserved for us as part of the biblical canon.

The first example I will note is David — the man after God's own heart — who has given us a vivid portrait of his religion in the book of Psalms. The holy songs he has left us there are nothing

other than the expressions and outpourings of devout and holy affections: a humble and fervent love for God, wonder at His glorious perfections and wonderful works, earnest desires and thirsting and longing of soul after God, delight and joy in God, a sweet and tender gratitude to God for His great goodness, a holy exultation and triumph of soul in God's favor and sufficiency and faithfulness, his love for and delight in God's people — the excellent of the earth — his great delight in God's Word and worship, his grief for his own sin and the sins of others, and his fervent zeal for God and against the enemies of God and His church. These expressions of holy affection that fill every page of David's Psalms are all the more relevant to our current subject because those Psalms are not only the expressions of the religion of so outstanding a believer — one whom God Himself commends as so pleasing to His heart — but were also written under the direction of the Holy Spirit for the use of God's church in its public worship, not only in that age but in all ages to come, as expressions fitted to capture the religion of all believers in every era, as well as the religion of the psalmist himself. It is also worth noting that David in the Psalms speaks not as a private individual, but as the psalmist of Israel — as the subordinate leader of God's church and guide in its worship and praise. In many of the Psalms he speaks in the name of Christ, voicing these outpourings of holy affection on Christ's behalf, and in many others he speaks in the name of the church.

Another example is the apostle Paul, who was in many respects the foremost of all the ministers of the New Testament — above all others a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles, the chief instrument for spreading and establishing the Christian church in the world, and for clearly revealing the glorious myster-

ies of the Gospel for the instruction of the church throughout all ages. Some have not unreasonably considered him the most outstanding servant of God who ever lived, destined to receive the highest rewards in his Master's heavenly kingdom. By what Scripture says of him, he clearly appears to have been a person full of affection. And it is very evident that the religion expressed in his letters consists very much in holy affections. All his writings show that he was, throughout his life, wholly driven and consumed by a most ardent love for his glorious Lord — counting everything else as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Him, and regarding it all as rubbish that he might gain Christ. He describes himself as overpowered by this holy affection, and virtually compelled by it to press forward in his service through all difficulties and sufferings (2 Corinthians 5:14). His letters overflow with affection toward the people of Christ. He speaks of his deep love for them (2 Corinthians 12:15; Philippians 4:1-2). Of his abundant love (2 Corinthians 2:4). And of his tender, motherly love for them, like a nursing mother with her children (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8): 'Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives.' He also speaks of his deep affection for them (Philippians 1:8; Philemon 12 and 20). He speaks of his earnest concern for others (2 Corinthians 8:16). And of his tender compassion toward them (Philippians 2:1). And of his concern for others rising to anguish of heart (2 Corinthians 2:4): 'For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.' He speaks of the great conflict of his soul for them (Colossians 2:1). He speaks of great and continual grief in his heart

out of love for his fellow Jews (Romans 9:2). He speaks of his heart being opened wide to fellow Christians (2 Corinthians 6:11): 'Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.' He frequently expresses affectionate and longing desire (1 Thessalonians 2:8; Romans 1:11; Philippians 1:8; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:4). The same apostle very often expresses the affection of joy in his letters (2 Corinthians 1:12; 7:7, 9, 16; Philippians 1:4; 2:1-2; 3:3; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 3:9). He speaks of rejoicing with great joy (Philippians 4:10; Philemon 7). Of his joying and rejoicing (Philippians 2:17). And of his rejoicing exceedingly (2 Corinthians 7:13). And of being filled with comfort and overflowing with joy. He speaks of himself as always rejoicing (2 Corinthians 6:10). He speaks of the triumphs of his soul (2 Corinthians 2:14). And of glorying in tribulations (2 Thessalonians 1:4; Romans 5:3). He also expresses the affection of hope — in Philippians 1:20 he speaks of his earnest expectation and hope. He likewise expresses the affection of zeal (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). And it is plain from his entire life as recorded in Acts, and from all his letters and the accounts he gives of himself there, that the affection of zeal — with the cause of his Master and the welfare and advance of His church as its object — was mighty in him, continually firing his heart and strongly driving him to those great and relentless labors he undertook: instructing, exhorting, warning, and reproofing others, laboring for them like a woman in childbirth; contending against powerful and numerous enemies who constantly opposed him, wrestling against rulers and authorities, not fighting as one who beats the air, running the race set before him, continually pressing forward through every kind of difficulty and suffering — so much so that others thought he was completely out of his mind.

How full of affection he was is further evident from the fact that he was so frequently moved to tears. In 2 Corinthians 2:4 he speaks of his many tears, and in Acts 20:19. And of the tears he shed continuously, night and day, in Acts 20:31.

If anyone can read these accounts of this great apostle — given both by Scripture and by himself — and still not see that his religion consisted very much in affection, that person must have a remarkable ability to close his eyes against the light shining most directly in his face.

The third example I will mention is the apostle John — that beloved disciple who was closer to his Master than any of the twelve, and admitted to greater privileges than any of them. He was one of the three present on the mountain at Christ's transfiguration, at the raising of Jairus's daughter, and with Him during His agony in the garden. He was one of the three whom the apostle Paul names as the three main pillars of the Christian church. Above all others, he was the one privileged to lean on his Master's breast at the Last Supper, and was chosen by Christ as the disciple to whom He would reveal His wonderful purposes for His church until the end of time — as recorded in the book of Revelation. He was also preserved far longer than all the other apostles to set things in order in the Christian church after their deaths, and to close the canon of the New Testament and of all Scripture.

It is evident from all his writings — as scholars of theology have generally observed — that he was a person remarkably full of affection. His words to those he wrote to are inexpressibly tender and moving, breathing nothing but the most fervent love, as

though he were made entirely of sweet and holy affection. This cannot be adequately demonstrated without quoting his writings in full.

Seventh, the One whom God sent into the world to be its Light, the Head of the whole church, and the perfect example of true religion and virtue for all to imitate — the Shepherd whom the whole flock should follow wherever He goes, even the Lord Jesus Christ — was a person remarkably tender and affectionate in heart. His virtue was expressed very much in the exercise of holy affections. He was the greatest example of ardent, vigorous, and strong love — both toward God and toward human beings — that has ever existed. It was these affections that prevailed in that mighty struggle in His agony, when He prayed more earnestly and offered up strong cries and tears, and wrestled in tears and blood. Such was the power of His holy love in that great struggle that it proved stronger than death and overcame the intense natural affections of fear and grief — when He was deeply distressed and His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow, even to the point of death. He appeared full of affection throughout the course of His life as well. We read of His great zeal, fulfilling what was written in Psalm 69: 'Zeal for Your house has consumed Me' (John 2:17). We read of His grief over the sins of people (Mark 3:5): 'He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.' And of His breaking out in tears and cries of anguish at the sight of human sin and misery, and of the city of Jerusalem filled with such people (Luke 19:41-42): 'When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.' And Luke 13:34: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills

the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!' We read of Christ's earnest desire (Luke 22:15): 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' We often read of the affection of compassion in Christ (Matthew 15:32 and 18:34; Luke 7:13), and of His being moved with compassion (Matthew 9:36 and 14:14; Mark 6:34). How tender His heart was is seen in His response to Mary and Martha as they mourned for their brother and came to Him with their complaints and tears. Their tears quickly drew tears from His own eyes. He was moved by their grief and wept with them — even though He knew their sorrow would so soon be turned to joy when their brother was raised from the dead (see John 11). And how indescribably affectionate was that final conversation Jesus had with His eleven disciples on the evening before His crucifixion — when He told them He was going away, foretold the great difficulties and sufferings they would face in the world after He was gone, comforted and instructed them as His dear children, and bequeathed to them His Holy Spirit, and with it His peace, comfort, and joy, as it were in His last will and testament — in John 13, 14, 15, and 16 — concluding it all with that affectionate intercessory prayer for them and His whole church in chapter 17. Of all the conversations ever spoken or recorded by any human being, this seems to be the most filled with affection — and the most deeply moving.

Eighth, the religion of heaven consists very much in affection.

There is undoubtedly true religion in heaven, and true religion in its greatest purity and perfection. But according to Scripture's depiction of heaven, the religion there consists chiefly in holy and

mighty love and joy, and in expressing those affections in the most fervent and exalted praise. So the religion of the saints in heaven consists in the same things as the religion of the saints on earth described in our text — namely love, and joy inexpressible and full of glory. It would be foolish to argue that because the saints in heaven are not joined to flesh and blood, and have no bodily fluids to be stirred by the great emotions of their souls, their surpassing love and joy are therefore not affections. We are not speaking of the affections of the body but of the affections of the soul, the chief of which are love and joy. When these are present in the soul — whether in the body or out of it — the soul is affected and moved. And when they are present in the soul at the intensity they are in the saints in heaven, the soul is mightily affected and moved — which is the same thing as saying it has great affections. It is true that we do not know from experience what love and joy are like in a soul apart from a body, or in a glorified body. But the saints on earth do know what divine love and joy in the soul are, and they know what love and joy of the same kind as the love and joy in heaven are like. The love and joy of believers on earth are the beginning and dawning of the light, life, and blessedness of heaven. They are like the love and joy there — or rather, they are the same in nature, though not the same in degree and circumstances. This is evident from many scriptures: Proverbs 4:18; John 4:14; John 6:40, 47, 50, 51, 54, 58; 1 John 3:15; 1 Corinthians 13:8-12. It is unreasonable to suppose that the love and joy of the saints in heaven differ from the holy love and joy of believers on earth not merely in degree and circumstances but so completely in nature that they are not affections at all — simply because the saints in heaven have no blood and vital spirits to be set in motion by them. That motion of

the blood and vital spirits is not of the essence of these affections in people on earth but only their effect — and even then, by a kind of feedback effect, it may produce some circumstantial difference in the mind's sensation. There is a sensation of the mind that loves and rejoices which is prior to any effects on the body's fluids, and this sensation of the mind therefore does not depend on those physical motions and can exist in the soul without the body. Wherever love and joy are being exercised, this sensation of the mind is present — whether in the body or out of it. And this inward sensation, or kind of spiritual sense or feeling and movement of the soul, is what is called affection. The soul, when it thus feels (if I may put it that way) and is thus moved, is said to be affected — especially when this inward sensation and movement are at a very high degree, as they are in the saints in heaven. If we can learn anything about heaven from Scripture, the love and joy the saints have there are exceedingly great and vigorous — impressing the heart with the strongest and most vivid sense of inexpressible sweetness, powerfully moving, animating, and engaging them, making them like a flame of fire. If such love and joy are not affections, then the word affection has no use in the language. Would anyone say that the saints in heaven, as they behold the face of their Father, the glory of their Redeemer, and contemplate His wonderful works — and especially His laying down His life for them — have their hearts entirely unmoved and unaffected by all they behold and consider?

Since the religion of heaven consists chiefly in holy love and joy, it consists very much in affection. And therefore, undoubtedly, true religion consists very much in affection. The way to learn the true nature of anything is to go where that thing is found in its pu-

rity and perfection. If we want to know the nature of true gold, we must view it not in the ore but when it has been refined. If we want to learn what true religion is, we must go where there is true religion and nothing but true religion — in its highest perfection, without any defect or mixture. All who are truly religious are not of this world; they are strangers here and belong to heaven. They are born from above; heaven is their native country, and the nature they receive through this heavenly birth is a heavenly nature — they receive an anointing from above. The principle of true religion in them is a communication of the religion of heaven. Their grace is the dawn of glory, and God fits them for that world by conforming them to it.

Ninth, this is further shown by the nature and design of the practices and duties that God has appointed as the means and expressions of true religion.

Take prayer as an example. It is evident that we are not appointed in this duty to declare God's perfections — His majesty, holiness, goodness, and all-sufficiency — or our own smallness, emptiness, dependence, and unworthiness, and our needs and desires, in order to inform God of these things or to move His heart to be willing to show us mercy. Rather, the purpose is to affect our own hearts with the things we express, and so to prepare us to receive the blessings we ask for. Similarly, the postures and outward behaviors in the worship of God that by custom signify humility and reverence are of no use beyond what tendency they have to affect our own hearts or the hearts of others.

The duty of singing praises to God seems to be appointed entirely to stir up and express religious affections. There is no other reason why we should express ourselves to God in verse rather

than prose, and do it with music, except that our nature is such that these things have a tendency to move our affections.

The same is evident from the nature and design of the sacraments that God has appointed. God, taking into account our nature, has not only appointed that we should be told about the great things of the Gospel and of Christ's redemption, and instructed in them through His Word, but also that these things should be, in a sense, placed before our eyes in tangible representations through the sacraments — in order to affect us with them more powerfully.

One of the great and primary purposes for which God has ordained that His Word in the holy Scriptures should be opened, applied, and pressed home upon people through preaching, is clearly the impressing of divine things upon the hearts and affections of people. This is why having good Bible commentaries, expositions, and theological books — though they may serve just as well as preaching to give people a sound doctrinal and intellectual understanding of God's work — is not enough on its own. They do not have an equal tendency to impress those truths upon people's hearts and affections. God has appointed the specific, personal application of His Word to people in preaching as a fitting means to affect sinners with the importance of the things of religion, their own misery, their need for rescue, and the glory and sufficiency of the rescue provided. It is also appointed to stir up the minds of believers and quicken their affections by regularly bringing the great things of religion before their attention and setting them out in their proper light — even to those who already know them and have been fully instructed in them (2 Peter 1:12-13). In particular, preaching is appointed to promote those two affections spoken of in our text — love and joy: 'And He gave some as apostles, and

some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers... for the building up of the body of Christ... in love' (Ephesians 4:11-12, 16). The apostle, in instructing and guiding Timothy concerning the ministry, informs him that the great goal of the Word a minister is to preach is love (1 Timothy 1:3-5). And another affection that God has appointed preaching to promote in believers is joy — which is why ministers are called 'helpers of your joy' (2 Corinthians 1:24).

Tenth, the fact that true religion — holiness of heart — consists very much in the affections of the heart is also shown by the fact that Scripture locates the sin of the heart very much in hardness of heart. Scripture does this throughout. It was hardness of heart that stirred grief and displeasure in Christ toward the Jews (Mark 3:5): 'He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.' It is from having such a heart that people store up wrath for themselves. Romans 2:5: 'Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.' The reason given why the house of Israel would not obey God was that they were hard-hearted (Ezekiel 3:7): 'But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.' The wickedness of that rebellious generation in the wilderness is attributed to the hardness of their hearts (Psalm 95:7-10): 'Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart...' This is named as what prevented Zedekiah

from turning to the Lord (2 Chronicles 36:13): 'He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from returning to the Lord God of Israel.' This principle is spoken of as the reason people have no fear of God and stray from His ways. Isaiah 63:17: 'Why, O Lord, do You cause us to stray from Your ways and harden our heart from fearing You?' People's rejecting Christ and opposing Christianity is also traced to this principle (Acts 19:9): 'But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people...' God's abandoning people to the power of sin and corruption in their hearts is often expressed as God hardening their hearts. Romans 9:18: 'So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.' John 12:40: 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart.' The apostle seems to treat an evil heart that departs from the living God and a hard heart as the same thing. Hebrews 3:8: 'Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me...' Verses 12-13: 'Take care, brothers, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called Today, so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.' And that great work of God in conversion — which consists in delivering a person from the power of sin and mortifying corruption — is described more than once as God's taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26).

A hard heart plainly means an unaffected heart — a heart not easily moved by virtuous affections, like stone: insensible, unresponsive, unmoved, and resistant to impression. This is why the hard heart is called a stony heart and is contrasted with a heart of flesh that has feeling, is sensitive, and is moved. Scripture speaks

of both a hard heart and a tender heart — and these are clearly meant as opposites. But what is a tender heart other than a heart that is easily impressed by what ought to affect it? God commends Josiah because his heart was tender, and the things mentioned as evidence of that tenderness make clear that it means his heart was easily moved by religious and godly affection (2 Kings 22:19): 'Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you, declares the Lord.' This is also one of the ways in which we must become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of God — we must have hearts that are tender and easily affected and moved in spiritual and divine matters, just as little children are easily moved in other things.

In some scriptural passages the very words themselves make clear that a hard heart means a heart empty of affection. To indicate that the ostrich has no natural affection for her young, it is said (Job 39:16): 'She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers.' Similarly, a person whose heart is unaffected in times of danger is described as hardening his heart (Proverbs 28:14): 'How blessed is the man who fears always, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.'

Since it is so clear that a hard heart in Scripture means a heart lacking godly affections, and since Scripture so frequently locates the sin and corruption of the heart in hardness of heart, it follows plainly that grace and holiness of heart must consist, in great part, in the opposite — in having godly affections and being open and responsive to them. Theologians generally agree that sin is funda-

mentally and at its root negative or privative — that is, sin has its foundation in the absence or lack of holiness. Therefore, if sin very much consists in hardness of heart — and thus in the absence of godly affections — holiness must very much consist in those godly affections.

I am far from suggesting that all affections indicate a tender heart. Hatred, anger, pride, and other selfish and self-exalting affections may greatly prevail in the hardest heart. But it is evident that hardness of heart and tenderness of heart are expressions that relate to the affections of the heart — they describe a heart that is either open and responsive to, or closed and resistant to, certain affections — about which I will have occasion to say more later.

Taken altogether, I think it is clearly and abundantly evident that true religion lies very much in the affections. I do not mean by this that religion in the hearts of true believers is always exactly proportional to the degree of affection or present emotional intensity. True believers undoubtedly have much affection that is not spiritual — their religious affections are often mixed, with much coming from nature rather than grace. And although the affections do not have their seat in the body, the physical constitution of a person may greatly contribute to the present emotional intensity of the mind. The degree of true religion is better judged by the firmness and strength of the settled habit of holy affection — the degree to which it is a constant and established disposition — than by the intensity of any particular moment. And the strength of that habit is not always proportional to its outward expressions or inward effects in terms of mental agitation, vehemence, or sudden changes in the train of thought. Yet it is evident that religion consists so much in affection that without holy affection there is no

true religion. No light in the understanding is genuinely good unless it produces holy affection in the heart. No principle or habit in the heart is genuinely good unless it exercises itself in holy affection. And no outward fruit is genuinely good unless it proceeds from such exercise.

Having considered the evidence for the proposition I laid down, I proceed now to some conclusions.

First, we can see from this how great an error it is for people to dismiss all religious affections as having nothing solid or substantial in them.

There seems to be too strong a tendency toward this kind of dismissal prevailing in this land at present. During the recent extraordinary season of revival, many who appeared to have strong religious affections did not display a right spirit and fell into many errors in the midst of their affection and the heat of their zeal. The intense affections of many also seemed to fade so quickly, and some who seemed to be powerfully lifted up and consumed with joy and zeal for a time appear to have returned like a dog to its vomit. As a result, religious affections in general have lost credibility with many people, as though true religion did not consist in them at all. This is how naturally and easily we run from one extreme to the other. Not long ago we were at the opposite extreme — there was a widespread tendency to regard all high religious affections as outstanding exercises of true grace, without much inquiry into the nature and source of those affections or the manner in which they arose. If a person appeared to be genuinely moved and elevated — full of religious talk, expressing himself with great warmth and earnestness, and described as 'filled' or 'very full,' as the common phrases went — it was too often the habit to conclude,

without further examination, that such a person was filled with the Spirit of God and had outstanding experience of His gracious influences. That was the extreme that was prevalent three or four years ago. But more recently, instead of esteeming and admiring all religious affections without distinction, the far more common tendency is to reject and discard all of them without distinction. Here we see the craftiness of Satan. When he saw that affections were highly valued, knowing that most people in the land were inexperienced in such things and lacked the spiritual experience of strong religious affections that would enable them to judge and distinguish between true and false, he knew he could play his game best by sowing weeds among the wheat — mixing false affections with the genuine works of God's Spirit. He knew this was a likely way to deceive and eternally ruin many souls, to deeply wound religion in true believers and entangle them in a terrible wilderness, and eventually to bring all religion into disrepute. But now that the damaging consequences of these false affections have appeared — and it has become very obvious that some of those emotional displays that made such a striking impression and were so greatly admired by many were in reality nothing — the devil sees it is in his interest to work a different way. He now strives with all his might to spread and establish the conviction that all affections and stirrings of the mind in religious matters are worthless, to be avoided and carefully guarded against as things that lead to harm. He knows this is the way to reduce all religion to a mere lifeless formality, to effectively shut out the power of godliness and everything that is genuinely spiritual, and to drive true Christianity entirely away. For although true religion does indeed require something more than affection alone, true religion consists so much in

the affections that there can be no true religion without them. The person who has no religious affection is in a state of spiritual death, entirely without the powerful, life-giving, saving work of the Spirit of God in his heart. Just as there is no true religion where there is nothing but affection, there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. On one hand, understanding is necessary alongside an affected and fervent heart — where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart. On the other hand, where there is a kind of light without warmth — a head full of ideas and theories with a cold and unaffected heart — there can be nothing divine in that light. Such knowledge is not true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are genuinely understood, they will affect the heart. The reason people are not affected by such infinitely great, important, glorious, and wonderful things as they regularly hear and read of in God's Word is, without question, that they are spiritually blind. If they were not blind, it would be impossible — utterly contrary to human nature — for their hearts not to be powerfully impressed and deeply moved by such things.

This habit of dismissing all religious affections is a sure way to harden people's hearts further, to encourage them in their spiritual dullness and insensitivity, to keep them in a state of spiritual death throughout their lives, and to bring them at last to eternal death. The widespread prejudice against religious affections presently in this land is plainly having terrible effects: hardening the hearts of sinners, dampening the graces of many believers, stunting the life and power of religion, undermining the effect of the means of grace, holding people down in dullness and apathy, and undoubt-

edly causing many to greatly offend God by holding low and contemptuous views of the extraordinary work He has recently done in this land.

For people to despise and speak against all religious affections is the way to shut religion entirely out of their own hearts and to accomplish the complete ruin of their souls.

Those who condemn high affections in others are certainly unlikely to have high affections themselves. And let it be noted: those who have little religious affection have certainly little religion. And those who condemn others for their religious affections and have none themselves have no religion.

There are false affections and there are true ones. A person's having much affection does not prove he has genuine religion, but a person's having no affection proves he has no genuine religion. The right approach is not to reject all affections and not to approve all, but to distinguish among affections — approving some and rejecting others, separating the wheat from the chaff, the gold from the dross, the precious from the worthless.

Second, if true religion lies very much in the affections, we may conclude from this that means are to be valued that tend powerfully to move the affections. Books that do this, a style of preaching and administering the ordinances that does this, and a manner of worshipping God in prayer and singing praises that does this — all of these are greatly to be desired, as having a strong tendency to affect deeply the hearts of those who use them.

This kind of approach would formerly have been highly valued and praised by people generally throughout the land, as the most excellent and profitable — as having the greatest tendency to ad-

vance the purposes of the means of grace. But the prevailing taste seems recently to have changed in a strange way. The kind of earnest, heartfelt praying and preaching that would formerly have been admired and approved — and admired for exactly this reason, that it tended to move the affections — now immediately provokes disgust in large numbers of people, and stirs no affections in them other than displeasure and contempt.

Perhaps formerly the general tendency of the people — at least common people — was to place too much value on emotionally moving delivery in public worship. But now a very large portion of the people seem to have swung far into the opposite extreme. There certainly can be means that have a strong tendency to stir the feelings of weak and uninformed persons, and yet have little tendency to genuinely benefit their souls. Though such means may tend to excite emotions, they may have little or no tendency to excite godly affections or any affections that lead toward grace. But undoubtedly, when the things of religion in the means used are handled according to their true nature and presented accurately — so as to convey correct understanding and right judgment of them — the more tendency those means have to move the affections, the better.

Third, if true religion lies very much in the affections, we can see from this how much cause we have to be ashamed and humbled before God that we are not more affected by the great things of religion. As the foregoing discussion makes clear, this lack of affection arises from our having so little true religion.

God gave human beings affections for the same purpose He gave all the other faculties and principles of the human soul — to serve as instruments in humanity's chief end and the great busi-

ness for which God created us, namely religion. And yet how common it is for people to have their affections far more engaged and exercised by other things than by religion! In matters that concern worldly interest, outward pleasures, honor and reputation, and natural relationships, people have eager desires, intense appetites, warm and affectionate love, and fervent zeal. In these things their hearts are tender and sensitive — easily moved, deeply impressed, greatly concerned, strongly affected, and powerfully engaged. They are deeply grieved at worldly losses and greatly elated by worldly success and prosperity. But how insensible and unmoved most people are about the great things of another world! How dull their affections are! How heavy and hard their hearts in these matters! Their love is cold, their desires languid, their zeal low, their gratitude small. They can sit and hear of the infinite height and depth and length and breadth of God's love in Christ Jesus — of His giving His infinitely dear Son to be offered as a sacrifice for human sin, and of the unparalleled love of the innocent, holy, and tender Lamb of God shown in His dying agonies, His bloody sweat, His loud and bitter cries, and His bleeding heart — all of this for His enemies, to redeem them from deserved, eternal punishment and to bring them to unspeakable and everlasting joy and glory — and yet remain cold, heavy, unmoved, and indifferent! Where, if not here, are our affections called for? What demands them more than this? And what occasion, if not this, is fit for their lively and vigorous exercise? Can anything greater or more important be placed before us? Anything more wonderful and astonishing? Anything that more nearly concerns our own interest? Can we suppose that the wise Creator planted such principles in human nature as the affections to be useful to us — to be exercised on certain appropri-

ate occasions — but to remain inactive on an occasion such as this? Can any Christian who believes the truth of these things hold such a view?

If our affections ought ever to be exercised at all, and if the Creator did not unwisely design human nature in making these principles part of it — when otherwise they would be vain and useless — then they ought to be exercised about the objects most worthy of them. But is there anything Christians can find in heaven or on earth as worthy to be the object of their wonder and love, their earnest and longing desires, their hope and rejoicing and fervent zeal, as the things set before us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? In the Gospel, not only are the most affection-worthy things declared, but they are presented in the most moving manner possible. The glory and beauty of the blessed God — most worthy in itself to be the object of our wonder and love — is displayed there in the most moving manner that can be imagined, shining in full brilliance in the face of an incarnate, infinitely loving, gentle, compassionate, dying Redeemer. All the virtues of the Lamb of God — His humility, patience, gentleness, submission, obedience, love, and compassion — are set before us in the manner best calculated to move our affections. They all found their greatest test and highest expression, and thus their clearest demonstration, when He was in the most affecting of circumstances — under His last sufferings, those unutterable and unequalled sufferings He endured out of His tender love and pity for us. There too the hateful nature of our sins is shown in the most affecting way possible, as we see their dreadful effects in what our Redeemer — who undertook to answer for us — suffered on their account. And there we have the most affecting revelation of God's hatred of sin and His wrath and justice in pun-

ishing it — His justice in its strictness and inflexibility, and His wrath in its terribleness, in punishing our sins so severely in One who was infinitely dear to Him and infinitely loving toward us. God has arranged everything in the work of our redemption and in the glorious purposes revealed to us in the Gospel as though every detail were deliberately designed to reach our hearts at their most tender point and to move our affections as powerfully and deeply as possible. How much cause we have, therefore, to be humbled to the dust that we are not more affected!

PART 1.

In these words, the apostle describes the inner state of the Christians he was writing to, who were enduring persecution at the time. These persecutions are what he refers to in the two preceding verses, when he speaks of the trial of their faith and of their being in sorrow through various trials.

Such trials benefit true religion in three ways. First, they reveal its truth — they make it apparent that the faith is genuine. More than anything else, trials tend to distinguish between true religion and false, and to make that difference clearly visible. This is why they are called trials in the preceding verse and throughout Scripture — they test the faith and religion of those who profess it, just as gold is tested in fire to prove whether it is genuine. When the faith of true Christians is tested and proved genuine, it is found to result in praise, honor, and glory, as that preceding verse shows.

Second, these trials benefit true religion not only by revealing its truth but also by making its genuine beauty and excellence stand out. True virtue never appears more attractive than when it

is most oppressed, and the divine excellence of authentic Christianity is never displayed to better advantage than under the greatest trials. It is then that true faith appears far more precious than gold, and for this reason is found to result in praise, honor, and glory.

Third, such trials benefit true religion by purifying and increasing it. They not only prove it to be true, but also refine it — stripping away the false elements that burden and hinder it, so that only what is genuine remains. They cause the beauty of true religion to appear to its best advantage, as noted above, and beyond that they actually increase that beauty by establishing and strengthening it, making it more lively and vigorous, and purifying it from the things that had obscured its brightness and glory. Just as gold tested in fire is purged of all impurities and dross and comes forth more solid and beautiful, so true faith tested in this way becomes more precious — and is thus also found to result in praise, honor, and glory. The apostle seems to have all three of these benefits of persecution in mind in the verse preceding the passage.

In this passage, the apostle describes how true religion was working in the Christians he wrote to during their persecutions — and through this operation, these benefits of persecution became visible in them. He is showing what kind of operation of true religion it was that, under persecution, proved their religion to be genuine, displayed its beauty and excellence in a striking way, and also showed it to be growing and being purified — so that it was on track to be found unto praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. There were two kinds of operation — two exercises of

true religion — in them under their sufferings, through which these benefits appeared, and which the apostle notes in this passage.

First, love to Christ: 'Whom having not seen, you love.' The world was ready to wonder what strange principle drove these believers to expose themselves to such great suffering — forsaking visible things and renouncing everything dear and pleasant to the senses. To the people around them they seemed to be out of their minds, acting as though they hated themselves. From the world's perspective, there was nothing that could account for such suffering or sustain them through it. But although there was nothing visible — nothing that the world saw, or that the Christians themselves had ever seen with their own eyes — that drove and sustained them, they had a supernatural principle of love for something unseen. They loved Jesus Christ, for they saw Him spiritually in a way the world could not, and in a way they had never seen Him with their physical eyes.

Second, joy in Christ. Though their outward sufferings were very severe, their inward spiritual joy was greater than their sufferings, and that joy sustained them and enabled them to suffer with cheerfulness.

The apostle notes two things about this joy. First, the way it arises — the way that Christ, though unseen, is its foundation, namely through faith, which is the evidence of things not seen: 'in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice.' Second, the nature of this joy: 'inexpressible and full of glory.' It was inexpressible in its kind — very different from worldly joys and physical pleasures, of a far purer, more elevated, and more heavenly nature, being something supernatural and truly divine,

so exquisitely excellent that no words could describe it. It was also inexpressible in degree, as God pleased to give them this holy joy abundantly and in great measure in their season of persecution.

Their joy was full of glory. Although the joy was inexpressible and no words could fully describe it, something could be said — and no words more fittingly captured its excellence than 'full of glory,' or as the original has it, 'glorified joy.' In rejoicing with this joy, their minds were filled with a kind of glorious brightness, and their very natures were elevated and ennobled. It was a most worthy and noble rejoicing that did not corrupt or degrade the mind as many carnal joys do, but greatly beautified and dignified it. It was a foretaste of the joy of heaven that lifted their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness. It filled their minds with the light of God's glory and caused them to shine with some measure of that glory reflected back.

From these words I draw the following proposition, or doctrine:

Doctrine: True religion consists, in great part, in holy affections.

Notice that when the apostle observes the operations and exercises of religion in the Christians he wrote to — when their religion appeared most genuinely true under the greatest trial, being tested like gold in fire — and when their religion not only proved true but was purified of all impurities and false mixtures, and when religion appeared in them most fully in its proper excellence and native beauty, found to result in praise, honor, and glory — it is the religious affections of love and joy that he singles out as then being in

exercise in them. These are the specific exercises of religion he points to as proving their faith to be true and pure and in its proper glory.

Here I would do two things.

First, explain what is meant by the affections.

Second, note some things that make it evident that a great part of true religion lies in the affections.

First, what are the affections of the mind?

The affections are simply the more vigorous and strongly felt exercises of the inclination and will of the soul.

God has endowed the soul with two faculties. One is the capacity for perception and understanding — the faculty by which the soul discerns, views, and judges things, which is called the understanding. The other faculty is the one by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is moved toward or away from them — drawn to them or pushed away from them. Rather than observing things as a detached, unaffected spectator, the soul through this faculty responds to things with liking or disliking, pleasure or displeasure, approval or rejection. This faculty is called by various names. Considered in itself, it is called the inclination. Considered in relation to the actions it determines and governs, it is called the will. And the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the heart.

The exercises of this faculty fall into two kinds: those by which the soul moves toward the things it perceives — approving them, taking pleasure in them, and being drawn to them — and those by

which the soul opposes the things it perceives — disapproving them, being displeased with them, pulling away from them, and rejecting them.

The exercises of the inclination and will vary greatly not only in their kinds but even more in their degrees. Some exercises of pleasure or displeasure, inclination or disinclination, carry the soul only a little beyond a state of perfect indifference. Above this there are higher degrees — stronger approval or dislike, stronger pleasure or aversion — and these can rise higher and higher until the soul acts vigorously and with strong feeling. At that point the actings of the soul are so intense that, through the laws governing the union of soul and body that the Creator has established, the motion of the blood and the body's vital spirits begins to be noticeably altered. This often produces some physical sensation, especially around the heart and the vital organs, which are the source of the body's fluids. It is for this reason that the mind — with regard to the exercises of this faculty — has been called the heart, apparently in all nations and throughout all ages. It should be noted that it is these more vigorous and strongly felt exercises of this faculty that are called the affections.

The will and the affections of the soul are not two separate faculties. The affections are not essentially distinct from the will, and they do not differ from the simple actings of the will and inclination of the soul — they differ only in the intensity and strength of the exercise.

It must be admitted that language is somewhat imprecise here, and the meaning of words in this area is somewhat loose and undefined, since language is governed by common usage rather than precise definition. In one sense, the affection of the soul differs not

at all from the will and inclination — the will is never exercised at all except to the extent that it is affected; it is not moved out of a state of perfect indifference except as it is affected one way or another, and it acts voluntarily only to that extent. Yet there are many actings of the will and inclination that are not commonly called affections. In everything we do voluntarily, there is an exercise of the will and inclination — our inclination governs our actions — but not all the actings of the inclination and will in the ordinary actions of daily life are typically called affections. Yet what are commonly called affections are not essentially different from those ordinary actings — they differ only in degree and manner of exercise. In every act of the will, the soul either likes or dislikes, is inclined or disinclined toward what is in view. These are not essentially different from the affections of love and hatred. When the soul's liking or inclination toward something is strong, vigorous, and lively, it is the very same thing as the affection of love. And when the soul's disliking and disinclination is strong, it is the very same thing as hatred. In every act of the will toward something not yet present, the soul is inclined to some degree toward that thing — and when that inclination is considerable, it is the very same as the affection of desire. In every degree of the will's act of approving something present, there is a degree of pleasure — and when that pleasure is considerable, it is the very same as the affection of joy or delight. And when the will disapproves of something present, the soul is displeased to some degree — and when that displeasure is great, it is the very same as the affection of grief or sorrow.

Such is our nature, and such are the laws governing the union of soul and body, that there is never any lively and vigorous exercise of the will or inclination of the soul without some effect on the

body — some change in the motion of its fluids, and especially of the vital spirits. Conversely, by those same laws of the union of soul and body, the condition of the body and the motion of its fluids can also promote the exercise of the affections. Yet the body is not the proper seat of the affections — only the mind is. The human body is no more capable of genuinely experiencing love or hatred, joy or sorrow, fear or hope, than the body of a tree is — or than the body itself is capable of thinking and understanding. Just as it is the soul alone that has ideas, so it is the soul alone that is pleased or displeased with its ideas. Just as it is the soul alone that thinks, so it is the soul alone that loves or hates, rejoices or grieves over what it thinks about. The physical motions of the vital spirits and bodily fluids do not properly belong to the nature of the affections, even though they always accompany them in our present state. They are only effects or accompaniments of the affections that are entirely distinct from the affections themselves and not essential to them — so that a disembodied spirit would be just as capable of love and hatred, joy or sorrow, hope or fear, or other affections as one united to a body.

Affections and passions are frequently used as synonyms, yet in common usage there is a distinction. Affection is the broader term, used for all vigorous and lively actings of the will or inclination, while passion refers more specifically to those that are more sudden, whose physical effects are more violent, and in which the mind is more overpowered and less in control of itself.

Just as all the exercises of the inclination and will involve either approving and liking or disapproving and rejecting, so the affections are of two kinds. They are those by which the soul moves

toward what it perceives — cleaving to it or seeking it — and those by which the soul pulls away from it and opposes it.

The affections of the first kind include love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, and satisfaction. The affections of the second kind include hatred, fear, anger, grief, and others like them, which need not be defined individually here.

Some affections are a blend of both kinds of will-actings. Pity, for example, contains something of the first kind toward the person who is suffering, and something of the second kind toward what that person is suffering. Similarly, zeal involves strong approval of some person or thing, along with vigorous opposition to whatever is seen as contrary to it.

There are other mixed affections that could be mentioned, but I will move on to the

second thing proposed: to note some things that make it evident that true religion consists, in great part, in the affections. And here,

First, what has already been said about the nature of the affections makes this evident on its own, and should be sufficient to settle the matter without anything further. For who would deny that true religion consists, in large measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul — in the fervent exercises of the heart?

The religion that God requires and will accept does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes that raise us only slightly above indifference. God's Word insists emphatically that we be in earnest — fervent in spirit — with our hearts vigorously engaged in religion (Romans 12:11): 'Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

Deuteronomy 10:12: 'And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul?' And Deuteronomy 6:4-5: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.' It is this fervent, vigorous engagement of the heart in religion that is the fruit of true circumcision of the heart — that is, genuine regeneration — and that receives the promises of life (Deuteronomy 30:6): 'Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.'

If we are not genuinely earnest in religion and our wills and inclinations are not strongly engaged, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great that there can be no fitting response in the exercises of our hearts to their nature and importance unless those exercises are lively and powerful. In nothing is vigor of the inclination so necessary as in religion, and in nothing is lukewarmness so offensive. True religion is always a powerful thing, and its power shows itself first in the inward exercises of the heart, where its principal and original seat is. This is why true religion is called the power of godliness — in contrast to the external appearances of it, which are merely the form (2 Timothy 3:5): 'holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.' The Spirit of God in those who have genuine and solid religion is a Spirit of powerful holy affection, and therefore God is said to have given them 'a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind' (2 Timothy 1:7). Those who receive the Spirit of God in His sanctifying and saving

influences are said to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire — because of the power and intensity of the exercises that the Spirit of God stirs up in their hearts, so that their hearts, when grace is active, may be said to burn within them, as was said of the disciples in Luke 24:32.

The work of religion is repeatedly compared in Scripture to activities in which people exert their hearts and strength to the fullest: running, wrestling or straining for a great prize or crown, fighting strong enemies who seek to take one's life, and waging war as those who take a city or kingdom by force.

Though true grace comes in various degrees, and there are some who are only babes in Christ — in whom the exercise of the inclination and will toward divine and heavenly things is comparatively weak — yet everyone who has the power of godliness in his heart has his inclinations and heart exercised toward God and divine things with such strength and intensity that these holy exercises prevail over all carnal or natural affections and are effective in overcoming them. For every true disciple of Christ loves Him more than father or mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, houses and lands — yes, even more than his own life. It follows from this that wherever true religion is found, there are vigorous exercises of the inclination and will toward divine objects. But as was shown above, the vigorous, lively, and strongly felt exercises of the will are nothing other than the affections of the soul.

Second, the Author of human nature has not only given affections to human beings but has made them the primary spring of human action. Just as affections not only necessarily belong to human nature but are a very great part of it, so — since by regeneration a person is renewed in the whole person and sanctified

throughout — holy affections not only necessarily belong to true religion but are a very great part of it. And since true religion is practical in nature, and God has so constituted human nature that the affections are very much the driving force behind human action, this also shows that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Human nature is such that people are largely inactive unless moved by some affection — love or hatred, desire, hope, fear, or some other. These affections are the driving forces that set people in motion in all the affairs of life and engage them in all their pursuits. They are what pushes people forward and carries them along in all their worldly endeavors, and especially what excites and energizes them in whatever they pursue earnestly and with vigor. We see that the world of humanity is extremely busy and active, and the affections of people are the engine of that motion. Remove all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all anger, zeal, and passionate desire, and the world would largely come to a standstill. There would be no such thing as human activity, no earnest pursuit of anything. Affection is what drives the greedy man in his pursuit of worldly profit; it is affection that propels the ambitious man in his chase of worldly glory; and it is affection that moves the pleasure-seeker in his pursuit of physical delights. The world has continued from age to age in constant motion and restless activity in pursuit of these things — but remove all affection, and the spring of that motion would be gone, and the motion itself would stop. And just as worldly affections are very much the engine of human action in worldly matters, so in religious matters, religious affections are

very much the engine of action. The person who has only doctrinal knowledge and intellectual understanding, without affection, is never genuinely engaged in the business of religion.

Third, the fact is plainly evident that the things of religion take hold of people's souls only to the extent that they affect them. Multitudes often hear the Word of God — hearing things that are infinitely great and important, that concern them most closely — and yet all that they hear seems entirely without effect, producing no change in their disposition or behavior. The reason is that they are not affected by what they hear. Many people regularly hear of the glorious perfections of God: His almighty power and boundless wisdom, His infinite majesty, His holiness that is too pure to look on evil and cannot tolerate iniquity, before whom even the heavens are not pure; and of God's infinite goodness and mercy; and of the great works of God's wisdom, power, and goodness in which these perfections appear so wonderfully. They hear specifically of the unspeakable love of God and Christ, of the great things Christ has done and suffered, of the great realities of the world to come — eternal misery in bearing the fierce wrath of almighty God, and endless blessedness and glory in God's presence and the enjoyment of His love. They also hear God's plain commands and His gracious counsel and warnings and the warm invitations of the Gospel. Yet they hear all these things and remain as they were before, with no noticeable change either in heart or practice — because they are not affected by what they hear, and they never will be changed until they are affected. I am bold to assert that no significant change has ever been wrought in the mind or conduct of any person by anything of a religious nature — anything read, heard, or seen — without the affections being moved. No unregen-

erate person has ever been earnestly seeking his salvation. No one has ever been crying out for wisdom, lifting up his voice for understanding, and wrestling with God in prayer for mercy, or been humbled and brought to the foot of God by any sense of his own unworthiness and deserving of God's displeasure, nor has anyone ever been moved to flee to Christ for refuge, while the heart remained unaffected. Nor has any believer ever been awakened out of a cold and lifeless spiritual condition, or recovered from a declining state in religion and brought back from a grievous departure from God, without the heart being affected. In a word, nothing significant has ever been accomplished in the heart or life of any person by the things of religion without the heart being deeply affected by them.

Fourth, throughout the holy Scriptures, religion is placed very much in the affections — such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal.

Scripture places much of religion in godly fear — so much so that it is frequently used as the defining characteristic of those who are truly religious: they tremble at God's Word, they fear before Him, their flesh trembles in fear of Him, they are afraid of His judgments, His excellence makes them afraid, and His dread falls upon them. The common title given to the saints in Scripture is 'those who fear God' or 'those who fear the Lord.' Because the fear of God is such a large part of true godliness, true godliness in general is very commonly called simply 'the fear of God' — as everyone who knows the Bible at all well knows.

Hope in God and in the promises of His Word is also spoken of in Scripture as a very significant part of true religion. It is mentioned as one of the three great things of which religion consists (1

Corinthians 13:13). Hope in the Lord is frequently mentioned as a characteristic of the saints: Psalm 146:5: 'How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.' Jeremiah 17:7: 'Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose trust is the Lord.' Psalm 31:24: 'Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord.' And there are many other similar passages. Religious fear and hope are more than once joined together as jointly defining the character of true believers. Psalm 33:18: 'Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness.' Psalm 147:11: 'The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.' Hope is so great a part of true religion that the apostle says we are saved by hope (Romans 8:24). And hope is described as the helmet of the Christian soldier (1 Thessalonians 5:8): 'and as a helmet, the hope of salvation' — and the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul that keeps it from being driven off course by the storms of the evil world. 'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul' — a benefit that true believers receive through it.

Scripture places religion very much in the affection of love — love for God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, love for God's people, and love for humanity in general. The texts that show this, in both the Old Testament and the New, are countless. More on this later.

The opposite affection — hatred — when directed toward sin, is also spoken of in Scripture as a significant part of true religion. It is presented as a mark by which true religion can be known and distinguished (Proverbs 8:13): 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.' Accordingly, the saints are called to demonstrate their sincerity by this (Psalm 97:10): 'Hate evil, you who love the Lord.' The psalmist mentions it as evidence of his own sincerity (Psalm 101:2-3): 'I will

walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away.' Psalm 119:104: 'I hate every false way.' (See also verse 128.) Again, Psalm 139:21: 'Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord?'

Holy desire — expressed in longings, hungerings, and thirsting after God and holiness — is also frequently mentioned in Scripture as an important part of true religion. Isaiah 26:8: 'The desire of our souls is for Your name and the remembrance of You.' Psalm 27:4: 'One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.' Psalm 42:1-2: 'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?' Psalm 63:1-2: 'My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.' Psalm 84:1-2: 'How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.' Psalm 119:20: 'My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times.' See also Psalm 73:25 and 143:6 and 130:6. Song of Solomon 3:1-2 and 6:8. Such holy desire and thirsting of the soul is listed among the great things that mark a person as truly blessed, at the opening of Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:6): 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.' And this holy thirst is spoken of as an important condition for receiving the blessings of eternal life (Revelation 21:6): 'I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.'

Scripture speaks of holy joy as a great part of true religion. It is presented as such in the passage we are considering. As an important part of religion, it is frequently commanded and urged with great earnestness. Psalm 37:4: 'Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.' Psalm 97:12: 'Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones.' Psalm 33:1: 'Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones.' Matthew 5:12: 'Rejoice and be glad.' Philippians 3:1: 'Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.' Philippians 4:4: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.' 1 Thessalonians 5:16: 'Rejoice always.' Psalm 149:2: 'Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.' Joy is listed among the chief fruits of the Spirit of grace (Galatians 5:22): 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy...' The psalmist mentions his holy joy as evidence of his sincerity (Psalm 119:14): 'I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.'

Religious sorrow, mourning, and brokenness of heart are also frequently spoken of as a great part of true religion. These qualities are often listed as distinguishing marks of true believers and a major part of their character. Matthew 5:4: 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Psalm 34:18: 'The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.' Isaiah 61:1-2: 'The Lord has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to comfort all who mourn.' This godly sorrow and brokenness of heart is spoken of not only as a distinguishing mark of the saints but as something that is particularly acceptable and pleasing to God. Psalm 51:17: 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.' Isaiah 57:15: 'Thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name

is Holy: I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.' Isaiah 66:2: 'To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit.'

Another affection frequently mentioned as a significant expression of true religion is gratitude — especially as expressed in thankfulness and praise to God. This is spoken of so extensively in the Psalms and throughout Scripture that citing individual texts is unnecessary.

Scripture also frequently speaks of mercy as a very great and essential part of true religion — so much so that good people in Scripture are identified by this quality, and 'a merciful person' and 'a good person' are essentially equivalent terms. Isaiah 57:1: 'The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart; and devout men are taken away.' Scripture speaks of this quality as one that especially marks a righteous person. Psalm 37:21: 'The righteous is gracious and gives,' and verse 26: 'All day long he is gracious and lends.' Psalm 112:4. Colossians 3:12: 'Put on, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion...' Mercy is one of the great qualities that mark those who are truly blessed, as our Savior describes them (Matthew 5:7): 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.' Christ speaks of mercy as one of the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23): 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.' To the same effect is Micah 6:8: 'He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' And also Hosea 6:6: 'For I delight in

loyalty rather than sacrifice.' This appears to have been a text our Savior was especially fond of, given the way He cited it repeatedly in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7.

Zeal is also spoken of as a very essential part of the religion of true believers. It is mentioned as a great goal Christ had in view in giving Himself for our redemption (Titus 2:14): 'who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.' And the absence of zeal is identified as the great failing of the luke-warm Laodiceans in Revelation 3:15-16, 19.

I have cited only a few texts from the countless passages throughout Scripture that place religion very much in the affections. But what has been shown should be sufficient to demonstrate that those who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections — and who maintain the contrary — must set aside what we have always recognized as our Bible and find some other standard by which to judge the nature of religion.

Fifth, Scripture represents true religion as summed up in love — the chief of all affections and the fountain from which all other affections flow.

This is how our blessed Savior presents the matter in answer to the lawyer who asked which commandment was the greatest. Matthew 22:37-40: 'Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' These words indicate that the two great commandments together contain all the duty and religion taught in the Law and the Prophets. The apostle Paul makes the same point repeatedly, as in Romans 13:8: 'He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.'

And in 1 Timothy 1:5: 'But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart...' The same apostle speaks of love as the greatest thing in religion — its very life, essence, and soul — without which the greatest knowledge and gifts, the most impressive religious profession, and everything else belonging to religion is empty and worthless. He presents love as the fountain from which everything good flows, in 1 Corinthians 13 throughout. The word translated 'charity' there is in the original the Greek word *agape*, which in English is simply love.

Now, while it is true that the love spoken of here includes the entire sincere disposition of the soul toward God and others, it is evident from what was observed above that when this disposition or inclination of the soul is in vigorous and strongly felt exercise, it becomes affection — it is nothing other than affectionate love. And surely it is this vigorous and fervent love that Christ speaks of as the sum of all religion, when He speaks of loving God with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds, and our neighbor as ourselves — as the sum of everything taught and commanded in the Law and the Prophets.

It should not be supposed, when this affection of love is spoken of here and in other scriptures as the sum of all religion, that this means only the outward act and not the inner habit, or that the exercise of the understanding is excluded — for all reasonable affection implies understanding. But it is undoubtedly true, and plain from these scriptures, that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love. And in this divine affection — together with a habitual disposition toward it, the understanding that serves as its foundation, and the fruits that flow from it — consists the whole of religion.

From this it clearly and certainly follows that a great part of true religion consists in the affections. For love is not only one of the affections — it is the first and chief of all the affections, and the fountain from which all the others flow. From love arises hatred of the things that oppose what we love or that hinder us from what we delight in. And from the various exercises of love and hatred — depending on the circumstances of their objects, whether present or absent, certain or uncertain, likely or unlikely — arise the other affections: desire, fear, joy, gratitude, and so on. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love for God flow all the other religious affections — fear of sin, joy in God when He is near and sensibly present, grief when He seems absent, joyful hope when a future enjoyment of God is anticipated, and fervent zeal for God's glory. In the same way, from a fervent love for others will arise all other virtuous affections toward them.

Sixth, the religion of the most outstanding believers we read of in Scripture consisted very much in holy affections.

I will take particular notice of three eminent believers who have expressed the frame and disposition of their own hearts — and so described their own religion and their manner of relating to God — in their writings that are preserved for us as part of the biblical canon.

The first example I will note is David — the man after God's own heart — who has given us a vivid portrait of his religion in the book of Psalms. The holy songs he has left us there are nothing other than the expressions and outpourings of devout and holy affections: a humble and fervent love for God, wonder at His glorious perfections and wonderful works, earnest desires and thirsting and longing of soul after God, delight and joy in God, a sweet and

tender gratitude to God for His great goodness, a holy exultation and triumph of soul in God's favor and sufficiency and faithfulness, his love for and delight in God's people — the excellent of the earth — his great delight in God's Word and worship, his grief for his own sin and the sins of others, and his fervent zeal for God and against the enemies of God and His church. These expressions of holy affection that fill every page of David's Psalms are all the more relevant to our current subject because those Psalms are not only the expressions of the religion of so outstanding a believer — one whom God Himself commends as so pleasing to His heart — but were also written under the direction of the Holy Spirit for the use of God's church in its public worship, not only in that age but in all ages to come, as expressions fitted to capture the religion of all believers in every era, as well as the religion of the psalmist himself. It is also worth noting that David in the Psalms speaks not as a private individual, but as the psalmist of Israel — as the subordinate leader of God's church and guide in its worship and praise. In many of the Psalms he speaks in the name of Christ, voicing these outpourings of holy affection on Christ's behalf, and in many others he speaks in the name of the church.

Another example is the apostle Paul, who was in many respects the foremost of all the ministers of the New Testament — above all others a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles, the chief instrument for spreading and establishing the Christian church in the world, and for clearly revealing the glorious mysteries of the Gospel for the instruction of the church throughout all ages. Some have not unreasonably considered him the most outstanding servant of Christ who ever lived, destined to receive the highest rewards in his Master's heavenly kingdom. By what

Scripture says of him, he clearly appears to have been a person full of affection. And very many things make it evident that the religion expressed in his letters consisted very much in holy affections. All his life shows that he was wholly driven and consumed by a most fervent love for his glorious Lord — counting everything else as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Him, and regarding it all as rubbish that he might gain Christ. He describes himself as overpowered by this holy affection, and virtually compelled by it to press forward in his service through all difficulties and sufferings (2 Corinthians 5:14). His letters overflow with affection toward the people of Christ. He speaks of his deep love for them (2 Corinthians 12:19; Philippians 4:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:2). Of his abundant love (2 Corinthians 2:4). And of his tender, motherly love for them, like a nursing mother with her children (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8): 'We proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives.' He also speaks of his deep affection for them (Philippians 1:8; Philemon 12 and 20). He speaks of his earnest concern for others (2 Corinthians 8:16) and of his tender compassion toward them (Philippians 2:1), and of his concern for others rising to anguish of heart (2 Corinthians 2:4): 'For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.' He speaks of the great conflict of his soul for them (Colossians 2:1). He speaks of great and continual grief in his heart out of love for his fellow Jews (Romans 9:2). He speaks of his heart being opened wide to fellow Christians (2 Corinthians 6:11): 'Our

mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.' He frequently expresses affectionate and longing desire (1 Thessalonians 2:8; Romans 1:11; Philippians 1:8; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:4). The same apostle very often expresses the affection of joy in his letters (2 Corinthians 1:12; 7:7, 9, 16; Philippians 1:4; 2:1-2; 3:3; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 3:9). He speaks of rejoicing with great joy (Philippians 4:10; Philemon 7), of his joying and rejoicing (Philippians 2:17), and of his rejoicing exceedingly (2 Corinthians 7:13). And of being filled with comfort and overflowing with joy (2 Corinthians 7:4). He speaks of himself as always rejoicing (2 Corinthians 6:10). He speaks of the triumphs of his soul (2 Corinthians 2:14), and of glorying in tribulations (2 Thessalonians 1:4; Romans 5:3). He also expresses the affection of hope — in Philippians 1:20 he speaks of his earnest expectation and hope. He likewise expresses the affection of godly zeal (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). And it is plain from his entire history after his conversion in Acts, and from all his letters and the accounts he gives of himself there, that the affection of love — with the cause of his Master and the welfare and advance of His church as its object — was mighty in him, continually firing his heart and strongly driving him to those great and relentless labors he undertook: instructing, exhorting, warning, and reproving others, laboring for them like a woman in childbirth; contending with powerful and numerous enemies who constantly opposed him, wrestling against rulers and authorities, not fighting as one who beats the air, running the race set before him, continually pressing forward through every kind of difficulty and suffering — so much so that others thought he was completely out of his mind. How full of affection he was is further evident from the fact that he was so frequently

moved to tears. In 2 Corinthians 2:4 he speaks of his many tears, and in Acts 20:19. And of the tears he shed continuously, night and day, in Acts 20:31.

If anyone can read these accounts of this great apostle — given both by Scripture and by himself — and still not see that his religion consisted very much in affection, that person must have a remarkable ability to close his eyes against the light shining most directly in his face.

The third example I will mention is the apostle John — that beloved disciple who was closer to his Master than any of the twelve, and admitted to greater privileges than any of them. He was one of the three present on the mountain at Christ's transfiguration, at the raising of Jairus's daughter, and with Him during His agony in the garden. He was one of the three whom the apostle Paul names as the three main pillars of the Christian church. Above all others, he was the one privileged to lean on his Master's breast at the Last Supper, and was chosen by Christ as the disciple to whom He would reveal His wonderful purposes for His church until the end of time — as recorded in the book of Revelation. He was also preserved far longer than all the other apostles to set things in order in the Christian church after their deaths, and to close the canon of the New Testament and of all Scripture.

It is evident from all his writings — as theologians have generally observed — that he was a person remarkably full of affection. His words to those he wrote to are inexpressibly tender and moving, breathing nothing but the most fervent love, as though he were made entirely of sweet and holy affection. This cannot be adequately demonstrated without quoting his writings in full.

Seventh, the One whom God sent into the world to be its Light, the Head of the whole church, and the perfect example of true religion and virtue for all to imitate — the Shepherd whom the whole flock should follow wherever He goes, even the Lord Jesus Christ — was a person remarkably tender and affectionate in heart. His virtue was expressed very much in the exercise of holy affections. He was the greatest example of ardent, vigorous, and strong love — both toward God and toward human beings — that has ever existed. It was these affections that prevailed in that mighty struggle in His agony, when He prayed more earnestly and offered up strong cries and tears, and wrestled in tears and blood. Such was the power of His holy love in that great struggle that it proved stronger than death and overcame the intense natural affections of fear and grief — when He was deeply distressed and His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow, even to the point of death. He appeared full of affection throughout the course of His life as well. We read of His great zeal, fulfilling what was written in Psalm 69: 'Zeal for Your house has consumed Me' (John 2:17). We read of His grief over the sins of people (Mark 3:5): 'He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.' And of His breaking out in tears and cries of anguish at the sight of human sin and misery, and of the city of Jerusalem filled with such people (Luke 19:41-42): 'When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.' And Luke 13:34: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!' We read of Christ's

earnest desire (Luke 22:15): 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' We often read of the affection of compassion in Christ (Matthew 15:32 and 18:34; Luke 7:13), and of His being moved with compassion (Matthew 9:36 and 14:14; Mark 6:34). How tender His heart was is seen in His response to Mary and Martha as they mourned for their brother and came to Him with their complaints and tears. Their tears quickly drew tears from His own eyes. He was moved by their grief and wept with them — even though He knew their sorrow would so soon be turned to joy when their brother was raised from the dead (see John 11). And how indescribably affectionate was that final conversation Jesus had with His eleven disciples on the evening before His crucifixion — when He told them He was going away, foretold the great difficulties and sufferings they would face in the world after He was gone, comforted and instructed them as His dear children, and bequeathed to them His Holy Spirit, and with it His peace, comfort, and joy, as it were in His last will and testament — in John 13, 14, 15, and 16 — concluding it all with that affectionate intercessory prayer for them and His whole church in chapter 17. Of all the conversations ever spoken or recorded by any human being, this seems to be the most filled with affection — and the most deeply moving.

Eighth, the religion of heaven consists very much in affection.

There is undoubtedly true religion in heaven, and true religion in its greatest purity and perfection. But according to Scripture's depiction of heaven, the religion there consists chiefly in holy and mighty love and joy, and in expressing those affections in the most fervent and exalted praise. So the religion of the saints in heaven consists in the same things as the religion of the saints on earth de-

scribed in our text — namely love, and joy inexpressible and full of glory. It would be foolish to argue that because the saints in heaven are not joined to flesh and blood, and have no bodily fluids to be stirred by the great emotions of their souls, their surpassing love and joy are therefore not affections. We are not speaking of the affections of the body but of the affections of the soul, the chief of which are love and joy. When these are present in the soul — whether in the body or out of it — the soul is affected and moved. And when they are present in the soul at the intensity they are in the saints in heaven, the soul is mightily affected and moved — which is the same thing as saying it has great affections. It is true that we do not know from experience what love and joy are like in a soul apart from a body, or in a glorified body. But the saints on earth do know what divine love and joy in the soul are, and they know what love and joy of the same kind as the love and joy in heaven are like. The love and joy of believers on earth are the beginning and dawning of the light, life, and blessedness of heaven — like the love and joy there, or rather the same in nature, though not the same in degree and circumstances. This is evident from many scriptures: Proverbs 4:18; John 4:14; John 6:40, 47, 50, 51, 54, 58; 1 John 3:15; 1 Corinthians 13:8-12. It is unreasonable to suppose that the love and joy of the saints in heaven differ from the holy love and joy of believers on earth not merely in degree and circumstances but so completely in nature that they are not affections at all — simply because the saints in heaven have no blood and vital spirits to be set in motion by them. That motion of the blood and vital spirits is not of the essence of these affections in people on earth but only their effect — and even then, by a kind of feedback effect, it may produce some circumstantial difference in

the mind's sensation. There is a sensation of the mind that loves and rejoices which is prior to any effects on the body's fluids, and this sensation of the mind therefore does not depend on those physical motions and can exist in the soul without the body. Wherever love and joy are being exercised, this sensation of the mind is present — whether in the body or out of it. And this inward sensation, or kind of spiritual sense or feeling and movement of the soul, is what is called affection. The soul, when it thus feels and is thus moved, is said to be affected — especially when this inward sensation and movement are at a very high degree, as they are in the saints in heaven. If we can learn anything about heaven from Scripture, the love and joy the saints have there are exceedingly great and vigorous — impressing the heart with the strongest and most vivid sense of inexpressible sweetness, powerfully moving, animating, and engaging them, making them like a flame of fire. If such love and joy are not affections, then the word affection has no use in the language. Would anyone say that the saints in heaven, as they behold the face of their Father, the glory of their Redeemer, and contemplate His wonderful works — and especially His laying down His life for them — have their hearts entirely unmoved and unaffected by all they behold and consider?

Since the religion of heaven consists chiefly in holy love and joy, it consists very much in affection. And therefore, undoubtedly, true religion consists very much in affection. The way to learn the true nature of anything is to go where that thing is found in its purity and perfection. If we want to know the nature of true gold, we must view it not in the ore but when it has been refined. If we want to learn what true religion is, we must go where there is true religion and nothing but true religion — in its highest perfection, with-

out any defect or mixture. All who are truly religious are not of this world; they are strangers here and belong to heaven. They are born from above; heaven is their native country, and the nature they receive through this heavenly birth is a heavenly nature — they receive an anointing from above. The principle of true religion in them is a communication of the religion of heaven. Their grace is the dawn of glory, and God fits them for that world by conforming them to it.

Ninth, this is further shown by the nature and design of the practices and duties that God has appointed as the means and expressions of true religion.

Take prayer as an example. It is evident that we are not appointed in this duty to declare God's perfections — His majesty, holiness, goodness, and all-sufficiency — or our own smallness, emptiness, dependence, and unworthiness, and our needs and desires, in order to inform God of these things or to move His heart to be willing to show us mercy. Rather, the purpose is to affect our own hearts with the things we express, and so to prepare us to receive the blessings we ask for. Similarly, the postures and outward behaviors in the worship of God that by custom signify humility and reverence are of no use beyond what tendency they have to affect our own hearts or the hearts of others.

The duty of singing praises to God seems to be appointed entirely to stir up and express religious affections. There is no other reason why we should express ourselves to God in verse rather than prose, and do it with music, except that our nature is such that these things have a tendency to move our affections.

The same is evident from the nature and design of the sacraments that God has appointed. God, taking into account our nature, has not only appointed that we should be told about the great things of the Gospel and of Christ's redemption, and instructed in them through His Word, but also that these things should be, in a sense, placed before our eyes in tangible representations through the sacraments — in order to affect us with them more powerfully.

One of the great and primary purposes for which God has ordained that His Word in the holy Scriptures should be opened, applied, and pressed home upon people through preaching, is clearly the impressing of divine things upon the hearts and affections of people. This is why having good Bible commentaries, expositions, and theological books — though they may serve just as well as preaching to give people a sound doctrinal and intellectual understanding of God's work — is not enough on its own. They do not have an equal tendency to impress those truths upon people's hearts and affections. God has appointed the specific, personal application of His Word to people in preaching as a fitting means to affect sinners with the importance of the things of religion, their own misery, their need for rescue, and the glory and sufficiency of the rescue provided. It is also appointed to stir up the minds of believers and quicken their affections by regularly bringing the great things of religion before their attention and setting them out in their proper light — even to those who already know them and have been fully instructed in them (2 Peter 1:12-13). In particular, preaching is appointed to promote those two affections spoken of in our text — love and joy: 'And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers... for the building up of the body of Christ... in love'

(Ephesians 4:11-12, 16). The apostle, in instructing and guiding Timothy concerning the ministry, informs him that the great goal of the Word a minister is to preach is love (1 Timothy 1:3-5). And another affection that God has appointed preaching to promote in believers is joy — which is why ministers are called 'helpers of your joy' (2 Corinthians 1:24).

Tenth, the fact that true religion — holiness of heart — consists very much in the affections of the heart is also shown by the fact that Scripture locates the sin of the heart very much in hardness of heart. Scripture does this throughout. It was hardness of heart that stirred grief and displeasure in Christ toward the Jews (Mark 3:5): 'He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.' It is from having such a heart that people store up wrath for themselves. Romans 2:5: 'Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.' The reason given why the house of Israel would not obey God was that they were hard-hearted (Ezekiel 3:7): 'But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.' The wickedness of that rebellious generation in the wilderness is attributed to the hardness of their hearts (Psalm 95:7-10): 'Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your heart, as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart...' This is named as what prevented Zedekiah from turning to the Lord (2 Chronicles 36:13): 'He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from returning to the Lord

God of Israel.' This principle is spoken of as the reason people have no fear of God and stray from His ways. Isaiah 63:17: 'Why, O Lord, do You cause us to stray from Your ways and harden our heart from fearing You?' People's rejecting Christ and opposing Christianity is also traced to this principle (Acts 19:9): 'But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people...' God's abandoning people to the power of sin and corruption in their hearts is often expressed as God hardening their hearts. Romans 9:18: 'So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.' John 12:40: 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart.' The apostle seems to treat an evil heart that departs from the living God and a hard heart as the same thing. Hebrews 3:8: 'Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me...' Verses 12-13: 'Take care, brothers, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called Today, so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.' And that great work of God in conversion — which consists in delivering a person from the power of sin and mortifying corruption — is described more than once as God's taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26).

A hard heart plainly means an unaffected heart — a heart not easily moved by virtuous affections, like stone: insensible, unresponsive, unmoved, and resistant to impression. This is why the hard heart is called a stony heart and is contrasted with a heart of flesh that has feeling, is sensitive, and is moved. Scripture speaks of both a hard heart and a tender heart — and these are clearly meant as opposites. But what is a tender heart other than a heart

that is easily impressed by what ought to affect it? God commends Josiah because his heart was tender, and the things mentioned as evidence of that tenderness make clear that it means his heart was easily moved by religious and godly affection (2 Kings 22:19): 'Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you, declares the Lord.' This is also one of the ways in which we must become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of God — we must have hearts that are tender and easily affected and moved in spiritual and divine matters, just as little children are easily moved in other things.

In some scriptural passages the very words themselves make clear that a hard heart means a heart empty of affection. To indicate that the ostrich has no natural affection for her young, it is said (Job 39:16): 'She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers.' Similarly, a person whose heart is unaffected in times of danger is described as hardening his heart (Proverbs 28:14): 'How blessed is the man who fears always, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.'

Since it is so clear that a hard heart in Scripture means a heart lacking godly affections, and since Scripture so frequently locates the sin and corruption of the heart in hardness of heart, it follows plainly that grace and holiness of heart must consist, in great part, in the opposite — in having godly affections and being open and responsive to them. Theologians generally agree that sin is fundamentally and at its root negative or privative — that is, sin has its foundation in the absence or lack of holiness. Therefore, if sin very

much consists in hardness of heart — and thus in the absence of godly affections — holiness must very much consist in those godly affections.

I am far from suggesting that all affections indicate a tender heart. Hatred, anger, pride, and other selfish and self-exalting affections may greatly prevail in the hardest heart. But it is evident that hardness of heart and tenderness of heart are expressions that relate to the affections of the heart — they describe a heart that is either open and responsive to, or closed and resistant to, certain affections — about which I will have occasion to say more later.

Taken altogether, I think it is clearly and abundantly evident that true religion lies very much in the affections. I do not mean by this that religion in the hearts of true believers is always exactly proportional to the degree of affection or present emotional intensity. True believers undoubtedly have much affection that is not spiritual — their religious affections are often mixed, with much coming from nature rather than grace. And although the affections do not have their seat in the body, the physical constitution of a person may greatly contribute to the present emotional intensity of the mind. The degree of true religion is better judged by the firmness and strength of the settled habit of holy affection — the degree to which it is a constant and established disposition — than by the intensity of any particular moment. And the strength of that habit is not always proportional to its outward expressions or inward effects in terms of mental agitation, vehemence, or sudden changes in the train of thought. Yet it is evident that religion consists so much in affection that without holy affection there is no true religion. No light in the understanding is genuinely good unless it produces holy affection in the heart. No principle or habit in

the heart is genuinely good unless it exercises itself in holy affection. And no outward fruit is genuinely good unless it proceeds from such exercise.

Having considered the evidence for the proposition I laid down, I proceed now to some conclusions.

First, we can see from this how great an error it is for people to dismiss all religious affections as having nothing solid or substantial in them.

There seems to be too strong a tendency toward this kind of dismissal prevailing in this land at present. During the recent extraordinary season of revival, many who appeared to have strong religious affections did not display a right spirit and fell into many errors in the midst of their affection and the heat of their zeal. The intense affections of many also seemed to fade so quickly, and some who seemed to be powerfully lifted up and consumed with joy and zeal for a time appear to have returned like a dog to its vomit. As a result, religious affections in general have lost credibility with many people, as though true religion did not consist in them at all. This is how naturally and easily we run from one extreme to the other. Not long ago we were at the opposite extreme — there was a widespread tendency to regard all high religious affections as outstanding exercises of true grace, without much inquiry into the nature and source of those affections or the manner in which they arose. If a person appeared to be genuinely moved and elevated — full of religious talk, expressing himself with great warmth and earnestness, and described as 'filled' or 'very full,' as the common phrases went — it was too often the habit to conclude, without further examination, that such a person was filled with the Spirit of God and had outstanding experience of His gracious in-

fluences. That was the extreme that was prevalent three or four years ago. But more recently, instead of esteeming and admiring all religious affections without distinction, the far more common tendency is to reject and discard all of them without distinction. Here we see the craftiness of Satan. When he saw that affections were highly valued, knowing that most people in the land were inexperienced in such things and lacked the spiritual experience of strong religious affections that would enable them to judge and distinguish between true and false, he knew he could play his game best by sowing weeds among the wheat — mixing false affections with the genuine works of God's Spirit. He knew this was a likely way to deceive and eternally ruin many souls, to deeply wound religion in true believers and entangle them in a terrible wilderness, and eventually to bring all religion into disrepute. But now that the damaging consequences of these false affections have appeared — and it has become very obvious that some of those emotional displays that made such a striking impression and were so greatly admired by many were in reality nothing — the devil sees it is in his interest to work a different way. He now strives with all his might to spread and establish the conviction that all affections and stirrings of the mind in religious matters are worthless, to be avoided and carefully guarded against as things that lead to harm. He knows this is the way to reduce all religion to a mere lifeless formality, to effectively shut out the power of godliness and everything that is genuinely spiritual, and to drive true Christianity entirely away. For although true religion does indeed require something more than affection alone, true religion consists so much in the affections that there can be no true religion without them. The person who has no religious affection is in a state of spiritual

death, entirely without the powerful, life-giving, saving work of the Spirit of God in his heart. Just as there is no true religion where there is nothing but affection, there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. On one hand, understanding is necessary alongside an affected and fervent heart — where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart. On the other hand, where there is a kind of light without warmth — a head full of ideas and theories with a cold and unaffected heart — there can be nothing divine in that light. Such knowledge is not true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are genuinely understood, they will affect the heart. The reason people are not affected by such infinitely great, important, glorious, and wonderful things as they regularly hear and read of in God's Word is, without question, that they are spiritually blind. If they were not blind, it would be impossible — utterly contrary to human nature — for their hearts not to be powerfully impressed and deeply moved by such things.

This habit of dismissing all religious affections is a sure way to harden people's hearts further, to encourage them in their spiritual dullness and insensitivity, to keep them in a state of spiritual death throughout their lives, and to bring them at last to eternal death. The widespread prejudice against religious affections presently in this land is plainly having terrible effects: hardening the hearts of sinners, dampening the graces of many believers, stunting the life and power of religion, undermining the effect of the means of grace, holding people down in dullness and apathy, and undoubtedly causing many to greatly offend God by holding low and contemptuous views of the extraordinary work He has recently done in this land.

For people to despise and speak against all religious affections is the way to shut religion entirely out of their own hearts and to accomplish the complete ruin of their souls.

Those who condemn high affections in others are certainly unlikely to have high affections themselves. And let it be noted: those who have little religious affection have certainly little religion. And those who condemn others for their religious affections and have none themselves have no religion.

There are false affections and there are true ones. A person's having much affection does not prove he has genuine religion, but a person's having no affection proves he has no genuine religion. The right approach is not to reject all affections and not to approve all, but to distinguish among affections — approving some and rejecting others, separating the wheat from the chaff, the gold from the dross, the precious from the worthless.

Second, if true religion lies very much in the affections, we may conclude from this that means are to be valued that tend powerfully to move the affections. Books that do this, a style of preaching and administering the ordinances that does this, and a manner of worshipping God in prayer and singing praises that does this — all of these are greatly to be desired, as having a strong tendency to affect deeply the hearts of those who use them.

This kind of approach would formerly have been highly valued and praised by people generally throughout the land, as the most excellent and profitable — as having the greatest tendency to advance the purposes of the means of grace. But the prevailing taste seems recently to have changed in a strange way. The kind of earnest, heartfelt praying and preaching that would formerly have

been admired and valued — and admired for exactly this reason, that it tended to move the affections — now immediately provokes disgust in large numbers of people, and stirs no affections in them other than displeasure and contempt.

Perhaps formerly the general tendency of the people — at least common people — was to place too much value on emotionally moving delivery in public worship. But now a very large portion of the people seem to have swung far into the opposite extreme. There certainly can be means that have a strong tendency to stir the feelings of weak and uninformed persons, and yet have little tendency to genuinely benefit their souls. Though such means may tend to excite emotions, they may have little or no tendency to excite godly affections or any affections that lead toward grace. But undoubtedly, when the things of religion in the means used are handled according to their true nature and presented accurately — so as to convey correct understanding and right judgment of them — the more tendency those means have to move the affections, the better.

Third, if true religion lies very much in the affections, we can see from this how much cause we have to be ashamed and humbled before God that we are not more affected by the great things of religion. As the foregoing discussion makes clear, this lack of affection arises from our having so little true religion.

God gave human beings affections for the same purpose He gave all the other faculties and principles of the human soul — to serve as instruments in humanity's chief end and the great business for which God created us, namely religion. And yet how common it is for people to have their affections far more engaged and exercised by other things than by religion! In matters that concern

worldly interest, outward pleasures, honor and reputation, and natural relationships, people have eager desires, intense appetites, warm and affectionate love, and fervent zeal. In these things their hearts are tender and sensitive — easily moved, deeply impressed, greatly concerned, strongly affected, and powerfully engaged. They are deeply grieved at worldly losses and greatly elated by worldly success and prosperity. But how insensible and unmoved most people are about the great things of another world! How dull their affections are! How heavy and hard their hearts in these matters! Their love is cold, their desires languid, their zeal low, their gratitude small. They can sit and hear of the infinite height and depth and length and breadth of God's love in Christ Jesus — of His giving His infinitely dear Son to be offered as a sacrifice for human sin, and of the unparalleled love of the innocent, holy, and tender Lamb of God shown in His dying agonies, His bloody sweat, His loud and bitter cries, and His bleeding heart — all of this for His enemies, to redeem them from deserved, eternal punishment and to bring them to unspeakable and everlasting joy and glory — and yet remain cold, heavy, unmoved, and indifferent! Where, if not here, are our affections called for? What demands them more than this? And what occasion, if not this, is fit for their lively and vigorous exercise? Can anything greater or more important be placed before us? Anything more wonderful and astonishing? Anything that more nearly concerns our own interest? Can we suppose that the wise Creator planted such principles in human nature as the affections to be useful to us — to be exercised on certain appropriate occasions — but to remain inactive on an occasion such as this? Can any Christian who believes the truth of these things hold such a view?

If our affections ought ever to be exercised at all, and if the Creator did not unwisely design human nature in making these principles part of it — when otherwise they would be vain and useless — then they ought to be exercised about the objects most worthy of them. But is there anything Christians can find in heaven or on earth as worthy to be the object of their wonder and love, their earnest and longing desires, their hope and rejoicing and fervent zeal, as the things set before us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? In the Gospel, not only are the most affection-worthy things declared, but they are presented in the most moving manner possible. The glory and beauty of the blessed God — most worthy in itself to be the object of our wonder and love — is displayed there in the most moving manner that can be imagined, shining in full brilliance in the face of an incarnate, infinitely loving, gentle, compassionate, dying Redeemer. All the virtues of the Lamb of God — His humility, patience, gentleness, submission, obedience, love, and compassion — are set before us in the manner best calculated to move our affections. They all found their greatest test and highest expression, and thus their clearest display, when He was in the most affecting of circumstances — under His last sufferings, those unutterable and unequaled sufferings He endured out of His tender love and pity for us. There too the hateful nature of our sins is shown in the most affecting way possible, as we see their dreadful effects in what our Redeemer — who undertook to answer for us — suffered on their account. And there we have the most affecting revelation of God's hatred of sin and His wrath and justice in punishing it — His justice in its strictness and inflexibility, and His wrath in its terribleness, in punishing our sins so severely in One who was infinitely dear to Him and infinitely loving toward us.

God has arranged everything in the work of our redemption and in the glorious purposes revealed to us in the Gospel as though every detail were deliberately designed to reach our hearts at their most tender point and to move our affections as powerfully and deeply as possible. How much cause we have, therefore, to be humbled to the dust that we are not more affected!

PART 2



PART 2.

If anyone, reading what was just said, is ready to excuse himself and say, 'I am not one of those who have no religious affections — I am often deeply moved by the great things of religion,' let him not rest content merely with the fact that he has religious affections. For as was noted before, just as we ought not to reject and condemn all affections as though true religion did not consist in them at all, so on the other hand we ought not to approve of all affections as though every person who was religiously moved therefore possessed true grace and was experiencing the saving work of God's Spirit. The right approach is to distinguish among religious affections, between one kind and another. So let us now endeavor to do that. To accomplish it, I would do two things.

First, I would note some things that are no signs one way or the other — neither proving that affections are the kind that true religion consists in, nor proving that they are not — so that we may be guarded against judging affections by false signs.

Second, I would observe some things in which affections that are spiritual and gracious differ from those that are not, and by which the genuine ones may be distinguished and recognized.

First, I would note some things that are no signs that affections are gracious, or that they are not.

First sign that proves nothing: religious affections are very intense or raised very high.

Some people are quick to condemn all high affections. If a person appears to have his religious affections raised to an extraordinary level, they are prejudiced against him and conclude that his experience is a delusion, without further inquiry. But if true religion lies very much in religious affections, as has been proved, then it follows that if there is a great deal of true religion, there will be great religious affections. If true religion in a person's heart is raised to a great height, divine and holy affections will also be raised to a great height.

Love is an affection — but will any Christian say that people ought not to love God and Jesus Christ in a high degree? And will any say that we ought not to have a very great hatred of sin and a very deep sorrow for it? Or that we ought not to exercise a high degree of gratitude to God for the mercies we receive from Him, and for the great things He has done for the salvation of fallen humanity? Or that we should not have very great and strong desires after God and holiness? Is there anyone who will claim that his affections in religion are already great enough — that he has no cause to be humbled that he is not more affected by the things of religion than he is, no reason to be ashamed that he has no greater love for God, sorrow for sin, and gratitude for the mercies he has received?

Who is there who will give thanks to God that he is already affected enough by what he has read and heard of God's wonderful love — to sinners and rebels — in giving His only begotten Son to die for them, and of the dying love of Christ, and will pray that he may not be affected with these things to any higher degree, on the grounds that high affections are improper and unbecoming in Christians, being the mark of enthusiasm and ruinous to true religion?

Our text plainly speaks of great and high affections when it speaks of 'rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory' — the most superlative expressions language can provide. And Scripture frequently calls us to exercise very high affections. The first and greatest commandment of the law piles up expressions, as though ordinary language were insufficient to express the degree to which we should love God: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' So the saints are called to exercise high degrees of joy: 'Rejoice,' says Christ to His disciples, 'and be exceedingly glad' (Matthew 5:12). And Psalm 68:3: 'Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice with gladness.' Similarly, throughout the Psalms the saints are repeatedly called to shout for joy, and in Luke 6:23, to leap for joy. They are also abundantly called to exercise high degrees of gratitude for mercies — to praise God with all their hearts, with hearts lifted up in the ways of the Lord, their souls magnifying the Lord, singing His praises, speaking of His wonderful works, declaring His deeds, and so on.

We find the most outstanding believers in Scripture often expressing high affections. The psalmist speaks of his love as though it were inexpressible (Psalm 119:97): 'Oh, how I love Your law!' He expresses a great degree of hatred of sin (Psalm 139:21-22): 'Do I

not hate those who hate You, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred.' He also expresses a high degree of sorrow for sin — speaking of his sin going over his head like a heavy burden too heavy for him, of his groaning all day long, of his vitality drained away like the heat of summer, and of his bones as though broken with sorrow. He often expresses great degrees of spiritual desire in some of the strongest language imaginable — his longing, his soul thirsting as in a dry and parched land where there is no water, his panting, his flesh and heart crying out, his soul breaking for the longing it has, and so on. He expresses the exercise of great and extreme grief for the sins of others. Psalm 119:136: 'My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not keep Your law.' And verse 53: 'Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.' He expresses high exercises of joy. Psalm 21:1: 'The king shall joy in Your strength, O Lord, and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice.' Psalm 71:23: 'My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You.' Psalm 63:3-7: 'Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, for You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.'

The apostle Paul expresses high exercises of affection. He expresses the exercise of pity and concern for others' good, even to anguish of heart; a great, fervent, and abundant love; earnest and longing desires; and overflowing joy. He speaks of the triumphs and exultation of his soul, his earnest expectation and hope, his

abundant tears, and the travail of his soul in pity, grief, earnest desires, godly jealousy, and fervent zeal — in many of the places already cited, which I need not repeat. John the Baptist expressed great joy (John 3:29). The blessed women who had anointed Jesus's body are described as being in a very high exercise of religious affection when Christ rose from the dead (Matthew 28:8): 'And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy.'

It is repeatedly foretold about the Church of God in her future seasons of blessing on earth that she will rejoice exceedingly. Psalm 89:15-16: 'How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O Lord, they walk in the light of Your countenance.' The same is depicted in countless other passages. And because high degrees of joy are the proper and natural fruit of the Gospel of Christ, the angel called that Gospel 'good news of great joy which will be for all the people.'

The saints and angels in heaven, where religion exists in its highest perfection, are powerfully affected by what they behold and contemplate of God's perfections and works. They are all like a pure, heavenly flame of fire in their love, and in the greatness and strength of their joy and gratitude. Their praises are described as 'the sound of many waters' and 'the sound of loud thunder.' The only reason their affections are so much greater than the holy affections of believers on earth is that they see the things they are affected by more according to their true nature, and their affections are more closely conformed to the nature of things. Therefore, if religious affections in people here below are of the same nature and kind as the angels' affections, the higher they are and the

closer they approach that heavenly degree, the better — because they will then be so much more conformed to the truth, as the angels' affections are.

From all of this it is certainly clear that religious affections being at a very high degree is no evidence that they are not of the nature of true religion. Those who condemn people as fanatics merely because their affections are very high are therefore greatly mistaken.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that religious affections are spiritual and gracious simply because they are great. Scripture — our sure and infallible guide in judging such matters — makes it very clear that there are religious affections which are very high and yet are not spiritual or saving. The apostle Paul speaks of affections in the Galatians that had been exceedingly elevated, and yet he clearly speaks of them with fear that they had been empty and had come to nothing. Galatians 4:15: 'Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I testify about you that, if possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.' And in verse 11 he tells them 'I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.' The children of Israel were greatly affected by God's mercy to them when they saw His wonderful works at the Red Sea and sang His praise — though they soon forgot His works. They were greatly affected again at Mount Sinai when they saw the marvelous manifestations God made of Himself there, and seemed powerfully engaged in mind, eagerly answering when God proposed His holy covenant to them, saying, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' But how quickly did all that powerful eagerness and engaged affection come to an end? How quickly were they turned aside after other gods, rejoicing and

shouting around their golden calf? So great multitudes who were affected with the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead were elevated to a high degree and made a great commotion when Jesus shortly after entered Jerusalem — greatly magnifying Christ, as though the ground were not good enough for the donkey He rode on to tread upon. They cut down palm branches and spread them in the road; they even pulled off their garments and spread them in the way. They cried with loud voices, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest' — making the whole city ring and throwing everyone into a stir. We learn from the evangelist John that the reason the people made this commotion was because they were affected by the miracle of raising Lazarus (John 12:18). Such a vast multitude cried Hosanna on this occasion that it led the Pharisees to say, 'Look, the world has gone after Him' (John 12:19) — yet Christ had at that time very few true disciples. And how quickly did all that commotion end? All of it was silenced and dead when this same Jesus stood bound, with a mock robe and a crown of thorns, to be mocked, spit upon, flogged, condemned, and executed. There was indeed a great and loud outcry about Him among the multitude then, just as before — but of a very different kind. It was not then 'Hosanna, Hosanna,' but 'Crucify, crucify.'

And all orthodox theologians agree that religious affections may be raised to a very high degree and yet contain nothing of true religion.

Second sign that proves nothing: religious affections have great effects on the body.

All affections whatsoever have, to some degree, an effect on the body. As was observed before, such is our nature, and such are the laws governing the union of soul and body, that the mind cannot have any lively or vigorous exercise without some effect upon the body. The body is so responsive to the mind, and the bodily fluids — especially the vital spirits — so closely attend the mind's movements and exercises, that there cannot even be an intense thought without some effect upon them. Indeed, it is questionable whether a soul in a body ever has a single thought or any exercise at all without some corresponding movement or change of movement, to some degree, in the fluids of some part of the body. But universal experience shows that the exercise of the affections has a particular tendency to produce some perceptible effect on the body. If this is so — that all affections have some bodily effect — then we may reasonably expect that the greater those affections are, and the more vigorous their exercise (other circumstances being equal), the greater the effect on the body will be. It is therefore not surprising that very great and strong exercises of the affections should have great effects on the body. And since there are very great affections of both the common and the spiritual kind, it is not surprising that great bodily effects should arise from both kinds of affections. Consequently, these bodily effects are no sign of which kind of affection produced them.

Great effects on the body are certainly no reliable evidence that affections are spiritual — for we see that such effects often arise from strong affections about ordinary, worldly things, when religion is not involved at all. If purely natural affections about earthly

things can produce these effects, I know of no basis on which to conclude that high affections about religious things — arising in the same way from nature — cannot have similar effects.

Nor, on the other hand, do I know of any rule by which anyone could determine that gracious and holy affections — when raised as high as any natural affections and exercised with equal strength and vigor — cannot have a great effect on the body. No such rule can be derived from reason. I know of no reason why being affected by a vision of God's glory should not cause the body to faint, just as well as being affected by a sight of Solomon's glory. No such rule has ever been drawn from Scripture. None has been found in all the recent controversies about things of this nature. There is a great power in spiritual affections. We read of the power that works in Christians, of the Spirit of God being in them as a Spirit of power, and of the effective working of His power in them — yes, of the working of God's mighty power in them. Yet human nature is weak. Flesh and blood are described in Scripture as exceedingly weak — especially in its unfitness for great spiritual and heavenly exercises (Matthew 26:41; 1 Corinthians 15:43, 50). The text we are studying speaks of 'joy inexpressible and full of glory.' Given what human nature is like and what the affections are like, who can reasonably doubt that such inexpressible and glorious joys could be too great and powerful for weak, frail humanity — so as to be considerably overpowering to it? Scripture makes it clear that true divine revelations of God's glory, when given in great measure, have a tendency — by their effect on the mind — to overpower the body. Scripture teaches us repeatedly that if these visions were given to the degree they are given in heaven, the weak frame of the body could not survive it, and that no one can see God in that way and

live. The knowledge the saints have of God's beauty and glory in this world, and the holy affections that arise from it, are of the same nature and kind as what the saints experience in heaven — differing only in degree and circumstances. What God gives them here is a foretaste of heavenly happiness and a pledge of their future inheritance. Who shall limit God in giving this pledge, or say He shall give only so much of the inheritance — only such a portion of the future reward as a pledge of the whole — and no more? And since God has taught us in His Word that the full reward is such that it would instantly destroy the body, is it not too bold for us to set boundaries on the sovereign God — to say that in giving the pledge of this reward in this world, He will never give so much of it as to even slightly diminish the strength of the body — when God has nowhere limited Himself in this way?

The psalmist, speaking of the intense religious affections he experienced, speaks of an effect in his flesh or body in addition to what was in his soul — expressly distinguishing the two, more than once. Psalm 84:2: 'My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.' Here is a clear distinction between the heart and the flesh, as both being affected. So also Psalm 63:1: 'My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.' Here again there is an evident and deliberate distinction between the soul and the flesh.

The prophet Habakkuk speaks of his body being overpowered by a sense of God's majesty (Habakkuk 3:16): 'I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters

my bones, and in my place I tremble.' So the psalmist also speaks expressly of his flesh trembling (Psalm 119:120): 'My flesh trembles for fear of You.'

That such revelations of God's glory given in this world sometimes have a tendency to overpower the body is evident from Scripture, which records that this has actually happened when God made certain external manifestations of Himself to some of the saints — manifestations designed to give them a sense of His majesty and glory. We have such instances in the prophet Daniel and the apostle John. Daniel, describing an external representation of the glory of Christ, says (Daniel 10:8): 'So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.' And the apostle John, describing a similar manifestation made to him, says (Revelation 1:17): 'When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.' It is of no use to say that these were only outward signs or symbols of Christ's glory which these believers beheld. For while it is true that they were outward representations of Christ's glory seen with their eyes, the purpose of these outward symbols was to give these prophets a true apprehension of what was represented — namely, the true divine glory and majesty of Christ, which is His spiritual glory. These outward signs were used only as significations of that spiritual glory, and that is undoubtedly how the prophets received, understood, and were affected by them. In accordance with God's purpose in giving these outward signs, they received through them a great and vivid apprehension of the real glory and majesty of God's nature — and were so powerfully affected that their souls were overcome and their bodies overpowered. And I think those are very bold and reckless who would

say that God cannot — or will not — give similarly clear and affecting apprehensions of that same real glory and majesty of His nature to any of His saints, without the use of such external signs.

Before I leave this point, I would further note that Scripture plainly and repeatedly uses bodily effects to express the intensity of holy and spiritual affections — such as trembling, groaning, being faint, crying out, panting, and fainting. Now if these are taken as merely figurative expressions representing the degree of affection, I trust everyone will grant that they are fitting and appropriate figures to represent the high degree of those spiritual affections that the Spirit of God uses them to express. But I do not see how they could be fitting figures if those spiritual affections — however high — had no tendency to produce any such effects, and if, on the contrary, these effects were actually the proper results and telltale signs of false affections and the deceptions of the devil. I cannot believe that God would routinely use things that are completely foreign to spiritual affections, and that are clear marks of the devil's handiwork and smelling strongly of the pit, as beautiful figures to represent the high degree of holy and heavenly affections.

Third sign that proves nothing: affections cause people to be fluent, fervent, and abundant in talking about the things of religion.

Many people, when they see this in others, are strongly prejudiced against them. The fact that a person is so full of religious talk is, to them, sufficient grounds to condemn him as a Pharisee or a pretentious hypocrite. On the other hand, many others, when they see this effect in someone, immediately and imprudently conclude that the person is a true child of God and under the saving influence of God's Spirit, and speak of it as strong evidence of a new

creation. They say things like, 'His mouth is now open — he used to be slow to speak, but now he is full and free. He speaks openly about his heart and shares his experiences and declares the praises of God; it comes from him as freely as water from a fountain,' and the like. And they are especially convinced — in an entirely confident and unquestioning way — that a person has been savingly worked upon if he is not only free and abundant but also very affectionate and earnest in his talk.

But this reflects little judgment and narrow, short experience, as events abundantly show. It is a mistake people commonly fall into by trusting their own wisdom and discernment and making their own ideas their rule, instead of the holy Scripture. Although Scripture is full of rules both for how we should judge our own condition and how we should form opinions about others, there is nowhere in Scripture any rule by which to judge ourselves or others to be in a good spiritual state on the basis of this effect. For this is merely the religion of the mouth and tongue — what Scripture represents by the leaves of a tree. Though a tree should not be without them, leaves are never given in Scripture as evidence that the tree is good.

A person may be inclined to talk abundantly about religious things from a good cause or from a bad one. It may be because his heart is very full of holy affections — for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. And it may be because his heart is very full of religious affection that is not holy — for still, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. It is very much the nature of affections — of whatever kind they are, and whatever objects they are exercised about — if they are strong, to move people to speak much about what they are affected with, and not only to

speak much but to speak very earnestly and fervently. Therefore, a person's talking abundantly and very fervently about the things of religion can be evidence of no more than this: that he is very much affected with the things of religion. But this may be — as has already been shown — with no grace at all. What people are strongly affected with, while that strong affection lasts, they will be earnestly engaged about and will be likely to show that earnestness in their talk and behavior. This is how the greater part of the Jews in all Judea and Galilee responded for a time to John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, when they were willing for a season to rejoice in his light — a great commotion was made throughout the entire land, and among all sorts of people, about this great prophet and his ministry. In the same way, the multitudes often showed great earnestness and intense engagement in every outward expression concerning Christ and His preaching and miracles — being astonished at His teaching, joyfully receiving the Word, following Him sometimes night and day, forsaking food, drink, and sleep to hear Him; once following Him into the wilderness, fasting for three days on the way, to hear Him; sometimes praising Him to the skies, saying, 'Never did a man speak the way this man speaks!' — fervent and earnest in what they said. But what did all of this come to, in the case of most of them?

A person may be excessively full of talk about his own religious experiences — constantly bringing it up everywhere and in all company — and when this is the case, it is more of a dark sign than a good one. A tree that is excessively full of leaves seldom bears much fruit. And a cloud, though it appears very heavy and full of water, if it brings too much wind with it, seldom provides much rain to the dry and thirsty earth. This very thing the Holy Spirit is

pleased to use several times as a picture of a great show of religion with the mouth without corresponding fruit in the life. Proverbs 25:14: 'Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.' And the apostle Jude, speaking of some in the early church who had crept in unnoticed among the saints and — making a great show of religion — had for a time gone unsuspected, says (Jude 4, 12): 'These are hidden reefs... clouds without water, carried along by winds.' And the apostle Peter, speaking of the same kind of people, says (2 Peter 2:17): 'These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm.'

False affections, if equally strong, are far more inclined to display themselves than true ones. This is because it is the nature of false religion to seek to be seen and noticed — as it was with the Pharisees.

Fourth sign that proves nothing: people did not produce the affections themselves or work them up by their own effort and planning.

Many people today condemn all affections that arise in a way their subjects cannot account for — that do not seem to be the result of their own efforts or the natural consequence of human faculties and principles in such circumstances and under such means — but rather seem to come from the influence of some outside, supernatural power on their minds. How greatly has the doctrine of the inward experience — or the perceptible sensing — of the immediate power and working of the Spirit of God been mocked and ridiculed by many in recent times. They say that the Spirit of God's way is to work silently, secretly, and imperceptibly alongside the

use of means and our own efforts, so that there is no distinguishing by sense between the influences of the Spirit of God and the natural operations of our own minds' faculties.

It is true that expecting to receive the saving influences of the Spirit of God while neglecting the diligent use of the appointed means of grace is unreasonable presumption. And to expect the Spirit of God to work savingly on one's mind without the Spirit's using means as instruments to accomplish the effect is a form of enthusiasm. It is also undoubtedly true that the Spirit of God works in very varied ways and circumstances, and that sometimes He works in a more secret and gradual manner, beginning from smaller beginnings, than at other times.

If a work of grace on the soul truly requires a power beyond what human nature itself possesses, then it is entirely reasonable to expect that this supernatural effect would often be perceptible to the person experiencing it. In other words, the person would often be aware that what is happening inside them goes beyond anything they could produce on their own.

Scripture consistently compares the work of grace to the most conspicuous acts of divine power: generation, resurrection, and creation. And throughout the biblical record, God's pattern was not to work invisibly and imperceptibly, but to make His hand clearly visible. When He brought Israel out of Egypt, He parted the Red Sea — a display of power that left no one wondering whether God had acted. When He gave Gideon victory, He stripped the army down to three hundred men so that no one could credit the outcome to human strength. When He put a giant down by a shepherd boy's hand, He deliberately chose the most improbable means. When He called the Gentiles into His kingdom, He did it in

ways that stunned and confounded everyone who witnessed it. The New Testament conversions — at Pentecost, in Samaria, among the Gentiles at Cornelius's house — all followed this same pattern: conspicuous divine power, not hidden, gradual influence that blended seamlessly with natural processes. God's design throughout has been to make it clear that the work is His.

This is precisely what Paul prays for in Ephesians 1:18-19 — that believers would be enlightened to know 'what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.' The word 'know' here does not mean merely to have a correct theological belief about God's power. It means to know it by experience — to be consciously aware of it, to have it registered in one's own perception. Paul is praying that believers would experientially sense the greatness of the power working in them. This is a direct refutation of the view that God's Spirit works only in hidden, imperceptible ways.

It is therefore both unreasonable and unscriptural to argue that a person's affections cannot be from God's Spirit simply because the person perceives them as not arising from his own efforts. On the contrary, if the work of grace is as Scripture describes it, we should often expect that its subjects would perceive it as something beyond themselves. To make that perception itself a disqualifying mark is to turn Scripture's testimony on its head.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that affections are gracious simply because a person did not deliberately produce them — because they arose in a way the person cannot explain.

Some people use this as an argument in their own favor when describing what they have experienced. They say things like: 'I am sure I did not make it myself. It was not the result of any planning or effort on my part. It came when I was thinking of nothing like it. Even if I wanted to, I could not make it happen again on demand.' From this they conclude that what they experienced must be from the mighty influence of God's Spirit and must be saving in nature. But this conclusion is ignorant and without foundation. What they experienced may indeed not have come from themselves directly — it may have come from some invisible agent, some spirit other than their own. But it does not follow that it was from the Spirit of God. There are spirits besides the Holy Spirit who influence human minds. We are told not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits to see whether they are from God. There are many false spirits, extremely active among people, who often disguise themselves as angels of light and in many remarkable ways — with great subtlety and power — imitate the operations of the Spirit of God. Many of Satan's operations are very clearly distinguishable from the voluntary workings of a person's own mind. This is true in the dreadful, horrifying suggestions and blasphemous thoughts he injects into many people, and in the groundless fears and terrors he authors. Satan's power can be just as immediate and evident in producing false comforts and joys as in producing terrors and horrible suggestions — and often is. It is not within human power to put oneself into the kind of raptures that the Anabaptists in Germany and many other raving enthusiasts like them experienced.

Beyond this, it must also be considered that a person may receive impressions on their mind that they did not produce themselves and that did not come from an evil spirit — they may come from the Spirit of God — and yet be only common, non-saving operations of the Spirit rather than saving ones. The subjects of such impressions may be among those described in Hebrews 6:4-5 — those who were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come — and yet may be entirely without the things that accompany salvation, mentioned in verse 9.

And in cases where neither a good nor an evil spirit has any direct involvement, persons — especially those with a weak or highly impressionable constitution, with a brain that is easily susceptible to impressions — may have strange perceptions, vivid imaginations, and strong accompanying affections that arise in unexplained ways without being voluntarily produced. We observe that such people are prone to these kinds of impressions about ordinary, earthly things, and there is equal reason to expect it can happen regarding spiritual things. Just as a sleeping person has dreams they did not deliberately produce, so many such persons, in a similar way, may experience involuntary impressions even while awake.

Fifth sign that proves nothing: religious affections come with scripture texts that are brought powerfully to mind.

It is no evidence against affections being gracious that they were occasioned by scriptures coming to mind — provided it is the scripture itself, or the truth the scripture contains and teaches, that is the basis of the affection, and not merely the sudden or unusual way in which the text arrived.

On the other hand, it is also no evidence that affections are gracious simply because they arose when a scripture text came suddenly and powerfully to mind — whether those affections are fear, hope, joy, sorrow, or anything else. Some people treat this as strong evidence that their affections are saving — especially when the affections produced are pleasant ones like hope or joy. They will mention it as proof that everything is right: 'My experience came with the Word,' they say, and they will add, 'Such and such wonderful promises were brought to my mind.' 'They came suddenly, as though they were being spoken directly to me.' 'I had no part in bringing that text to mind. I was not thinking of anything that would lead to it. It came all at once and caught me off guard.' 'I had not thought of it for a long time beforehand. At first I did not even know it was scripture. I could not remember ever having read it.' And they may add: 'One scripture came flowing in after another — texts from all over the Bible, the sweetest and most fitting texts imaginable, one after another — until I was as full as I could be. I could not help but stand in wonder. Tears flowed. I was full of joy and could no longer doubt.' And from all this they conclude they have undeniable evidence that their affections must be from God, must be of the right kind, and that their spiritual state must be good. But they have no grounds for this conclusion at all. Where did they find the rule that says: if affections or experiences arise alongside comforting scripture promises that came to mind unbidden — or if a series of sweet texts flows through the mind one after another — this is certain evidence that the experiences are saving? Where in the Bible — the only sure guide in matters of this kind — is any such rule found?

What deceives many less careful and thoughtful people in this matter seems to be this: Scripture is the Word of God, and there is nothing wrong in it — it is pure and perfect. Therefore, they reason, experiences that come from scripture must be right. But what must be considered is this: affections may arise on the occasion of scripture coming to mind without actually flowing from scripture as its genuine fruit through a right use of it. They may instead arise from an abuse of it. All that can legitimately be argued from the purity and perfection of God's Word regarding religious experience is this: experiences that are consistent with God's Word are right and cannot be otherwise. It does not follow that affections must be right simply because they arose on the occasion of a scripture text coming to mind.

What evidence is there that Satan cannot bring scripture texts to a person's mind and misapply them for deception? This does not seem to exceed Satan's power at all. There is no reason to think that bringing words or sounds to a person's mind requires omnipotence. If Satan has the power to bring any words or sounds to the mind at all, he may have the power to bring words that happen to be in the Bible. No greater power is required to produce the sounds of a scripture text in the mind than to produce the sounds of an idle story or song. So the same power in Satan that can revive one kind of words in the mind is sufficient to revive the other. The fact that those words carry a different meaning — which depends entirely on convention — does not change his ability to produce or revive the sounds. Or will anyone suppose that scripture texts are so sacred that Satan would not dare to misuse them? That too is a mistake. The one who was bold enough to seize Christ Himself — carrying Him into the wilderness, to a high mountain, and to the

pinnacle of the temple — is not afraid to touch the Scripture and abuse it for his own ends. He demonstrated this very boldness at the same time: during the temptation of Christ, he quoted scripture after scripture to deceive and tempt Him. If Satan dared, and was permitted, to bring scripture texts to the mind of Christ Himself in order to tempt Him, what reason do we have to conclude that he will not dare, or will not be permitted, to bring scripture texts to the minds of sinful people to tempt and deceive them? And if he can misuse one scripture text, he can misuse any other. The fact that it is an excellent passage — a comforting and precious promise — does not limit his courage or ability. If he can bring one comforting text to mind, he can bring a thousand. He can select exactly those scriptures best suited to serve his purposes, and he can heap up promise after promise — which, twisted by his false application, will work wonderfully to silence rising doubts and confirm the false joy and assurance of a poor, deceived sinner.

We know that Satan's instruments — corrupt and heretical teachers — do pervert the scripture to the damnation of themselves and others (2 Peter 3:16). They have free use of scripture in every part of it. There is no text so precious and sacred that they are not permitted to abuse it to the eternal ruin of multitudes of souls. And there are no weapons they wield with more destructive effect. There is no reason to conclude that Satan is not permitted to use scripture in the same way his instruments do. For when they do it, they act as his instruments and servants, driven by his instigation and influence. Without question, he does himself what he instigates others to do. Satan's servants simply follow their master and carry out the same work he performs himself.

Just as Satan can abuse scripture to deceive and destroy people, so can a person's own sinfulness and corruption. Sin in the human heart acts like its father. People's own hearts are deceptive like the devil, and use the same means to deceive.

It is therefore clear that a person may have intense affections of hope and joy that arise when scripture texts — even precious promises — come suddenly and powerfully to mind as though spoken directly to them, and that one text may follow another in a remarkable chain, and yet all of this may be no evidence whatsoever that these affections are divine or that they are anything other than the effects of Satan's delusions.

I would further note that a person may have heightened and joyful affections that come along with God's Word — and not only alongside it but genuinely arising from it — and yet those affections may be neither from Satan nor from the corruption of their own heart, but from some influence of the Spirit of God working through the Word, and yet have nothing of true and saving religion in them. The stony-ground hearers in the parable had great joy from the Word — joy that is depicted as springing up from the Word just as growth springs from a seed. In their outward appearance, their affections closely resembled the growth depicted on the good ground, with no difference visible until it was revealed by what happened in a time of trial. And yet there was no saving religion in those affections.

Sixth sign that proves nothing: religious affections have the appearance of love.

No professing Christian claims that the presence of love is an argument against the genuineness of religious affections. Some, however, believe that the appearance of love is good evidence that affections are from the sanctifying and saving influence of the Holy Spirit. Their reasoning is that Satan cannot love — that this affection is directly contrary to his nature, which is enmity and malice. It is true that nothing is more excellent, heavenly, and divine than a spirit of genuine Christian love toward God and people. It surpasses knowledge, prophecy, miracles, and speaking with the tongues of men and angels. It is the chief of the Spirit's graces, the life, essence, and sum of all true religion — and the quality by which we are most conformed to heaven and most contrary to hell and the devil. But it is poor reasoning to conclude from this that love has no counterfeits. The more excellent a thing is, the more counterfeits there will be of it. There are far more counterfeits of silver and gold than of iron and copper. There are many false diamonds and rubies, but who bothers to counterfeit common stones? The more excellent something is, the harder it is to duplicate its true inner nature and value — yet the more numerous the counterfeits will be, and the more art and cunning will be devoted to copying its outward appearance. This is why the greatest danger of fraud is in buying the most excellent medicines — even though they are hardest to replicate in true virtue, and even though their counterfeits are worthless when you get them. So it is with Christian virtues and graces. Satan's subtlety and the deceptive power of the human heart are most active in counterfeiting those virtues held in the highest regard. Perhaps no graces have more counterfeits than love and humility — for these are the virtues in which the beauty of a true Christian is most clearly seen.

With respect to love specifically, Scripture makes it plain that a person may have a kind of religious love and yet have no saving grace. Christ speaks of many professing Christians whose love will not last and who will therefore fail to be saved (Matthew 24:12-13): 'Because lawlessness will increase, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.' The final words plainly show that those whose love does not endure to the end, but grows cold, will not be saved.

A person may seem to love God and Christ — even with strong and intense affection — and yet have no grace. This was clearly the case with many graceless Jews: those who praised Christ so highly, following Him day and night without food, drink, or sleep; those who said, 'Lord, I will follow You wherever You go'; and those who cried, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.'

The apostle Paul seems to suggest that there were many in his day who had a counterfeit love to Christ, in Ephesians 6:24: 'Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.' The word translated 'sincerity' in some versions actually means 'incorruption' in the original language. This shows that Paul was aware that many had a kind of love for Christ that was not pure and spiritual.

Similarly, Christian love toward God's people can be counterfeited. Scripture makes it clear that there may be strong affections of this kind without saving grace — as was the case with the Galatians toward the apostle Paul, when they were ready to tear out their own eyes and give them to him, though Paul expressed his fear that their affections had come to nothing and that he had labored over them in vain (Galatians 4:11, 15).

Seventh sign that proves nothing: a person has many different kinds of religious affections occurring together.

Though false religion tends to be incomplete and distorted — lacking the wholeness and symmetry found in true religion — there can still be a great variety of false affections occurring together that closely resemble gracious affections.

It is clear that counterfeits exist for every kind of gracious affection. There are counterfeits of love to God and love to fellow believers, as just noted. There are counterfeits of godly sorrow for sin — as seen in Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab, and the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 9:27; 1 Samuel 24:16-17; 26:21; 1 Kings 21:27; Numbers 14:39-40). There are counterfeits of the fear of God — as in the Samaritans, who feared the Lord while still serving their own gods at the same time (2 Kings 17:32-33). And those enemies of God described in Psalm 66:3 who, through the greatness of God's power, submit themselves to Him — or, as the Hebrew puts it, lie to Him — offering counterfeit reverence and submission. There are counterfeits of gracious gratitude, as in the Israelites who sang God's praises at the Red Sea (Psalm 106:12), and in Naaman the Syrian after his miraculous healing from leprosy (2 Kings 5:15), and so on.

There are counterfeits of spiritual joy, as seen in the stony-ground hearers (Matthew 13:20) and especially many of John the Baptist's hearers (John 5:35). There are counterfeits of zeal, as in Jehu (2 Kings 10:16), in Paul before his conversion (Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:6), and in the unbelieving Jews (Acts 22:3; Romans 10:2). Graceless people may also have intense religious desires, like Balaam's desires — expressed when he had an extraordinary

vision of the blessed state of God's people as distinct from all others in the world (Numbers 23:9-10). They may also have a strong hope of eternal life, as the Pharisees had.

People in a state of nature are capable of resembling every kind of religious affection — and nothing prevents them from having many of them at the same time. Experience abundantly confirms that this is very often the case. It seems to be a common pattern that when false affections are stirred up to a high degree, many of them appear together. The crowd that accompanied Christ into Jerusalem after the miracle of raising Lazarus appears to have been moved by many religious affections at once, all at a high pitch. They seemed filled with wonder, and showed what appeared to be a high degree of love. They displayed great reverence by laying their garments on the ground for Christ to walk on. They showed great gratitude for the good works He had done, praising Him with loud voices for His salvation. They expressed earnest desires for the coming of God's kingdom, which they expected Jesus was about to establish, and showed great hope and elevated expectation of its immediate appearance. They were filled with joy, which animated their acclamations and made the noise ring throughout the entire city. And they showed great zeal and eagerness to accompany Jesus and assist Him without delay — now at the time of the great feast of the Passover — as He set up His kingdom. It is easy to understand from human nature and the nature of the affections why, when one affection is raised very high, it tends to stir up others — especially if the affection first raised is counterfeit love, as it was with the crowd who cried 'Hosanna.' Counterfeit love will naturally draw many other affections along with it. As noted earlier, love is the chief of the affections, the

source from which the others flow. Consider a person who has been in great distress and terror for some time, afraid of hell, his heart worn down by anguish and dreadful thoughts, standing on the edge of despair. Then suppose he is suddenly delivered — through some delusion of Satan — by being made firmly to believe that God has pardoned him and received him as a beloved object, and has promised him eternal life. Perhaps this comes through some vision or a vivid image that suddenly arises in his mind — a person with a beautiful face, smiling at him, arms open, with blood dripping down — which he takes to be Christ, with no genuine enlightening of the understanding to perceive Christ's spiritual excellence and fullness, and no true grasp of the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel. Or perhaps it comes through some voice or words that seem to be spoken to him, such as: 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven,' or 'Do not be afraid; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom' — which he takes to be the immediate voice of God, even though there was no genuine prior acceptance of Christ or closing of the heart with Him. If we suppose such a case, what a rush of passions would crowd into such a person's mind, all at once or in rapid succession? It can be explained entirely by natural principles that such a person's heart, in those circumstances, would soar to the heights with transports of joy, and would be filled with fervent affection toward the imaginary God or Redeemer he believes has rescued him from the dreadful destruction he so feared — and has received him with special tenderness as a favored one. It is natural that he would now be filled with wonder and gratitude, that his mouth would be open and full of talk about his experience, that for a time he would think and speak of almost nothing else, that he would magnify the God

who has done so much for him, call on others to rejoice with him, appear with a cheerful face, and speak with a loud voice. And though before his supposed deliverance he was full of complaints against God's justice, now it would come easily for him to submit to God, acknowledge his unworthiness, cry out against himself, appear humble before God, and lie at His feet as quiet as a lamb. He would confess his unworthiness and cry out, 'Why me? Why me?' — much like Saul, who when Samuel told him God had appointed him king answered, 'Am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me like this?' — language very similar to that of David, a true saint (2 Samuel 7:18): 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?' Nor is it surprising that such a person would delight in being around those who affirm and applaud his happy condition, that he would love all who esteem and admire him and his experiences, that he would have intense zeal against all who would minimize such things, that he would be inclined to openly separate from and declare war on all who are not of his party. He would glory in his sufferings, be quick to condemn and censure all who seem to doubt or question these things, and — while the warmth of his affections lasts — would be extremely eager to work hard, deny himself, and promote the cause of those who favor such things, zealously trying to increase their number — just as the Pharisees crossed sea and land to make a single convert. And I could go on and mention many more things that would naturally arise in such circumstances. Anyone who thinks such responses cannot arise in this way without any supernatural divine power has given very little thought to human nature.

Just as all Christian affections flow from genuine divine love, in the same way other false affections naturally flow from counterfeit love. In both cases, love is the source and the other affections are the streams that flow from it. The various faculties, principles, and affections of human nature are like many channels from a single fountain. If the water in the fountain is pure, pure water flows through all those channels. If the water is poisoned, then poisoned streams flow out through all of them. The channels themselves look the same in either case — the great difference lies in the nature of the water. Or consider a different image: human nature is like a tree with many branches growing from one root. If the sap in the root is good, good sap flows through all the branches, and the fruit produced is wholesome. If the sap in the root is poisonous, the same is true throughout the branches, and the fruit is deadly. The two trees may look exactly alike in shape, but the difference is discovered only when you eat the fruit. This is how it often is — at least in some measure — between true believers and hypocrites. There is sometimes a striking similarity between true and false religious experiences, in their outward appearance and in what the people who have them say and report. The difference is much like the difference between the dreams of Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and his chief baker. The two dreams seemed very much alike — so much so that when Joseph interpreted the cupbearer's dream as meaning he would be released from prison and restored to the king's favor and his honored position in the palace, the baker was filled with hope and expectation and told his dream as well. But he was terribly disappointed. Though his dream appeared so similar to the favorable, well-promising dream of his companion, the outcome was entirely opposite.

Eighth sign that proves nothing: comforts and joys seem to follow spiritual awakening and conviction of conscience in a particular order.

Many people are prejudiced against affections and experiences that come in a particular sequence that many ministers have emphasized: first, awakening, fear, and solemn apprehensions of judgment; then a humbling sense of total sinfulness and helplessness; and then, light and comfort. They regard all such descriptions of a fixed sequence or set of steps as human inventions. In particular, when high affections of joy follow severe distress and terror, many treat this as an argument against those affections. But these prejudices and objections have no basis in reason or Scripture. Surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that before God delivers a person from a state of sin and exposure to eternal destruction, He would give that person some meaningful sense of the evil from which they are being rescued. This way, deliverance is experienced consciously — the person understands their own salvation and knows something of what God has done for them. Saved people move through two very different states: first, a state of condemnation, and then a state of justification and blessing. Since God deals with people according to their rational, intelligent nature, it seems entirely reasonable — and consistent with God's wisdom — that saved people would be in these two states in a way they are conscious of. First, that they would consciously experience being in a state of condemnation, in a condition of real misery and dreadful danger; and then afterward, that they would consciously experience being in a state of deliverance and happiness. First, they should be fully aware of their absolute need; and afterward, of Christ's sufficiency and God's mercy through Him.

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God's way of dealing with people is to lead them into a wilderness before He speaks comfort to them — to arrange things so that they are brought into distress, made to see their own helplessness and absolute dependence on His power and grace, before He acts to deliver them. God's time to relent for His people comes when their strength is gone and they have no one left, when they see that their false gods cannot help them and that the rock they trusted is worthless (Deuteronomy 32:36-37). Before God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, He prepared them by letting them see they were in a desperate situation, and they cried out to God because of their hard bondage (Exodus 2:23; 5:19). Before God worked the great deliverance at the Red Sea, they were brought into extreme distress: the wilderness had shut them in, they could not turn right or left, the Red Sea was before them, and the vast Egyptian army was behind them. They were brought to see they could do nothing to save themselves — that if God did not act, they would be immediately destroyed. Then God appeared and turned their cries into songs. Before they were brought into their rest and enjoyed the abundance of Canaan, God led them through a great and terrible wilderness to humble them, teach them what was in their hearts, and so do them good in the end (Deuteronomy 8:2, 16). The woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years was not healed until she had first spent everything she had on earthly physicians and could not be cured by any of them — left helpless, with nothing more to spend. Then she came to the great Physician, without money or price, and was healed by Him (Luke 8:43-44). Before Christ granted the request of the Canaanite woman, He first appeared to refuse her entirely, humbled her, and brought her to

acknowledge that she was no better than a dog. Then He showed her mercy and received her as a dear child (Matthew 15:22, and following). The apostle Paul, before a remarkable deliverance, was pressed beyond measure, beyond strength, to the point of despairing of life itself — but he had the sentence of death in himself so that he would not trust in himself but in God who raises the dead (2 Corinthians 1:8-10). There was first a great storm; the ship was covered with waves and about to sink, and the disciples were brought to cry out, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!' — and then the wind and sea were rebuked and there was a great calm (Matthew 8:24-26). The leper, before being cleansed, had his mouth covered and was required to acknowledge his great misery and total uncleanness by tearing his clothes and crying, 'Unclean! Unclean!' (Leviticus 13:45). And backsliding Israel, before God heals them, is brought to acknowledge that they have sinned and not obeyed the Lord's voice — to see that they lie down in their shame, that confusion covers them, that salvation hoped for from hills and mountains is in vain, and that God alone can save them (Jeremiah 3:23-25). Joseph, who was sold by his brothers and in this was a picture of Christ, brought his brothers into great anxiety and distress, led them to reflect on their sin and admit, 'We are truly guilty' — and finally to surrender themselves entirely into his hands as servants. Then he revealed himself to them as their brother and their savior.

When we consider the extraordinary manifestations God made of Himself to the saints of old, we find that He consistently appeared first in a terrifying way, and then in ways that brought comfort. So it was with Abraham: first a horror of great darkness fell upon him, and then God revealed Himself to him in sweet prom-

ises (Genesis 15:12-13). So it was with Moses at Mount Sinai: God first appeared to him in all the terrors of His dreadful majesty, so that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling' — and then He made all His goodness pass before him and proclaimed His name: 'The Lord God, gracious and merciful,' and so on. So it was with Elijah: first a stormy wind, an earthquake, and consuming fire, and then a still, small, gentle voice (1 Kings 19). So it was with Daniel: he first saw Christ's face like lightning, which terrified him and caused him to faint — and then he was strengthened and refreshed with comforting words: 'O Daniel, you who are greatly loved' (Daniel 10). So it was with the apostle John (Revelation 1). There is a consistent pattern observable in God's dealings and the deliverances He works for His people, and in the manifestations He makes of Himself to them, both in the ordinary and the extraordinary.

But many passages of Scripture more directly show that this is God's ordinary way of working salvation in people's souls — in the way He reveals Himself and His mercy in Christ through the ordinary work of His grace on sinners' hearts. The servant who owed his king ten thousand talents is first held to his debt: the king pronounces judgment against him and orders him to be sold, along with his wife and children, to make payment. In this way the king humbles him and brings him to acknowledge the full justice of the debt — and then forgives him everything. The prodigal son spends everything, is brought to see himself in desperate circumstances, humbles himself, and acknowledges his unworthiness — before his father runs to him, welcomes him, and celebrates (Luke 15). Old, deep wounds must be probed to the bottom in order to heal. Scripture compares sin to such a wound of the soul, and speaks of

healing this wound without probing it as vain and deceptive (Jeremiah 8:11). Christ, in the work of His grace on people's hearts, is compared to rain on mown grass — grass cut down by a scythe (Psalm 72:6) — a picture of His refreshing, comforting influence on the wounded spirit. After our first parents sinned, God first confronted them with the terror of His majesty and justice, and set their sin before them with all its gravity, before relieving them with the promise of the seed of the woman. Christians are described as those who have 'fled for refuge to take hold of the hope set before them' (Hebrews 6:18) — language that implies great fear and a sense of danger coming first. Similarly, Christ is called 'a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a great rock in a parched land' (Isaiah 32:2). And it seems to be the natural meaning of the word 'gospel' — good news — that it is news of deliverance and salvation coming after great fear and distress. There is every reason to believe that God deals with individual believers the way He dealt with His church: He first made her hear His voice in the law, with thunders and lightning, and kept her under that schoolmaster to prepare her for Christ — and then comforted her with the joyful sound of the gospel from Mount Zion. Likewise, John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Christ and to prepare people's hearts to receive Him — by confronting them with their sins and stripping the self-righteous Jews of their confidence in their own righteousness, telling them they were a generation of vipers and showing them the danger of the wrath to come, saying that the ax was already laid at the root of the trees, and so on.

If it is indeed God's pattern — as the foregoing considerations clearly show it is — to give people a meaningful sense of the greatness and dreadfulness of sin and their wretched condition before He gives them the comfort of deliverance, then surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that people under such convictions will often experience great distress and terrible apprehensions of mind. This is especially so when we consider what these evils actually are: great and many sins committed against the infinite majesty of the great God, and the prospect of enduring the full fury of His wrath for eternity. And it is even less surprising when we have clear examples in Scripture of people who were brought into extreme distress by such convictions before receiving saving comfort — as the crowd in Jerusalem who were 'cut to the heart' and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And the apostle Paul, who trembled and was astonished before he was comforted. And the jailer, who called for a light, rushed in trembling, fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

From all this it is clear that it is very unreasonable for professing Christians to treat the comfortable and joyful affections of others as suspect simply because they followed the kind of solemn conviction and distress that has been described.

On the other hand, it is also no evidence that comforts and joys are genuine simply because they follow intense terror and terrifying fears of hell. Some people place great weight on this — treating severe terror as evidence of a deep work of the law in the heart, which they believe properly prepares the way for genuine comfort. But they fail to distinguish between terror and genuine conviction of conscience. Though conviction of conscience often produces ter-

ror, the two are not the same thing — and terror often arises from other causes. Genuine conviction of conscience, through the influence of God's Spirit, consists in a real sense of the sinfulness of one's heart and life, and of the dreadfulness of sin as committed against a God of terrible majesty, infinite holiness, deep hatred of sin, and strict justice in punishing it. But some people have terrifying visions of hell — a dreadful pit ready to swallow them up, flames about to seize them, devils all around ready to take them — while at the same time showing very little genuine enlightening of conscience that actually convinces them of their sinfulness in heart and life. Satan, if permitted, can terrify people just as powerfully as the Spirit of God can. It is work that comes naturally to him, and he has many ways of doing it in ways that lead to no good. He may terrify people intensely by impressing on their minds vivid images: a frowning face, a drawn sword, black clouds of vengeance, words of awful doom being pronounced, hell gaping open, devils approaching — not to bring people to genuine conviction of things that are true and revealed in God's Word, but to lead them to false and groundless conclusions, such as that their time has passed, that they are reprobate, that God is implacable, that He has decided to cut them off immediately, and the like.

The terrors some people experience are also largely due to their particular temperament and physical constitution. It is obvious that some people are so constituted that their minds are more powerfully affected by whatever they encounter than others. The impression on the imagination stirs up the affections, which in turn heighten the imagination further, and so imagination and af-

fection act back and forth on each other until the affection is raised to an enormous height, and the person is completely overwhelmed and loses all self-control.

Some people speak of having a great sight of their own wickedness, when on careful examination they turn out to have little or no genuine conviction of conscience. They talk about having a dreadfully hard heart, how their heart lies like a stone — when in fact they have none of the thoughts in their mind that true hardness of heart actually involves. They speak of a dreadful burden and mass of sin, a heap of dark and loathsome filthiness within them — when, on close examination, they have no real sense of what corruption of nature actually consists in, no thought about any specific way in which their hearts fall short of what they should be, and no awareness of any actual movements of corruption within them. Many also think they have deep conviction of their actual sins when they truly do not. They talk of their sins being set in order before them, surrounding them in a circle with a dreadful and frightening appearance — when in reality they have barely any mental picture of the specific sins they have committed in the course of their lives, let alone a sense of their aggravating circumstances.

And if a person's terror truly did come from the awakening and convicting work of the Spirit of God, it does not follow that it must result in genuine saving comfort. The native corruption of the heart can quench the Spirit of God — after He has been striving — by leading people into presumptuous, self-exalting hope and joy, just as it can obstruct grace in other ways. Not every woman in labor actually gives birth to a living child; sometimes the result is something malformed, lacking any of the qualities of human life.

Pharaoh's chief baker, after he had lain in the dungeon alongside Joseph, had a dream that raised his hopes, and he too was lifted out of the dungeon like the chief cupbearer — but it was to be executed.

But even if comforts and joys not only follow great terror and awakening, but also appear to be preceded by exactly the kind of conviction and humbling that is often seen in true converts — coming in distinct steps and in the very method commonly observed — this is still no certain sign that the light and comfort that follows is true and saving. Here are the reasons for this.

First, just as Satan can counterfeit all the saving operations and graces of God's Spirit, he can also counterfeit those operations that prepare the way for grace. If Satan can copy the effects of the Spirit that are special, divine, and sanctifying — so closely that the resemblance is nearly perfect in everything observers can see — then he can far more easily imitate those works of the Spirit that are common, and which people are capable of experiencing while still in a state of spiritual death. These common works are not nearly as high above his power as the saving ones are. The works of God's Spirit by which He forms the creature in His own image and makes it a partaker of the divine nature are the highest and most divine of all God's works — furthest above the powers of nature and beyond the reach of any creature. But if Satan can produce convincing counterfeits of even these, he can certainly produce counterfeits of things that are of an infinitely lower kind. And experience makes it abundantly clear that false humiliations and false submissions do exist, just as false comforts do. Consider how far Saul was brought — wicked man and proud spirit that he was. Though he was a great king, he was led — under conviction of his

sin — to fall down, weeping aloud, before David his own subject (whom he had long hated and openly treated as an enemy), and to condemn himself before him, crying out, 'You are more righteous than I. You have treated me well, whereas I have treated you badly' (1 Samuel 24:16-17). At another time he cried, 'I have sinned. I have played the fool. I have erred greatly' (1 Samuel 26:21). And yet Saul seems to have had very little genuine influence of the Spirit of God at that time — for it was after God's Spirit had already departed from him and given him up, and an evil spirit had begun to trouble him. If this proud king, in a surge of feeling, was brought to humble himself so deeply before a subject he hated and continued to treat as an enemy, then surely there can be appearances of great conviction and humiliation before God in people who remain His enemies at heart and may continue so to the end. People who are terrified by fear of hell often appear to have been thoroughly stripped of confidence in their own righteousness — yet they have not truly been stripped of it in every way. They may have given up some ways of trusting in their own righteousness, while clinging to others that are more hidden and subtle. What often passes for humiliation is really just discouragement about certain things they used to rely on. And what is called submission to God is not genuine, unconditional surrender — it has some secret negotiation embedded in it that is difficult to detect.

Second, if the operations and effects of the Spirit of God in the convictions and comforts of true converts can be imitated, then their order can also be imitated. If Satan can counterfeit the things themselves, he can easily arrange them in a particular sequence. If he can produce A, B, and C, it is just as easy for him to put A first, then B, then C, as to arrange them in any other order. The nature

of divine things is harder for Satan to imitate than their sequence. He cannot perfectly duplicate the inner nature of divine operations — though his counterfeits may look very similar from the outside — but he can perfectly replicate their order. When producing counterfeits, no divine power is required to arrange them in a particular sequence. Therefore, no particular order or method of operations and experiences is a certain sign of their being from God. Only what Satan cannot do — what no power short of divine could bring about — can be trusted as certain evidence of grace.

Third, we have no certain rule for determining how far God's own Spirit may go in operations and convictions that are not in themselves spiritual and saving — while the person who experiences them is never actually converted but falls short of salvation in the end. There is no necessary connection in the nature of things between anything a natural person may experience while still in a state of nature and the saving grace of God's Spirit. And if there is no connection in the nature of things, then there can be no known and certain connection at all, unless it has been revealed by God. But God has revealed no certain connection between a state of salvation and anything a natural person can experience before believing in Christ. God has revealed no guaranteed connection between salvation and any human qualification, except grace itself and its fruits. Therefore we do not find any legal convictions, or comforts following those convictions, in any particular method or order, ever mentioned in Scripture as certain signs of grace or as experiences unique to the saints. We do find gracious operations and effects themselves mentioned as such signs — thousands of times.

This should be sufficient for Christians who are willing to let God's Word, rather than their own reasoning and experiences and guesses, be their sure and sufficient guide in matters of this kind.

Fourth, experience strongly confirms that a person appearing to have convictions and comforts following one another in the method and order often seen in true converts is no certain sign of grace. I appeal to all ministers in this land who have had extensive experience dealing with souls during the recent remarkable season of awakening: have there not been many who did not turn out well, who nevertheless gave a fine account of their experiences and appeared to be converted by the book — that is, with convictions and affections following distinctly and precisely in the order and method that has typically been described as the pattern of the Spirit's operations in conversion?

Just as appearing to follow the distinct steps and method commonly seen in true converts is no certain sign of genuine conversion, so the absence of that pattern is no evidence that a person is not converted. It can be demonstrated from Scripture that a sinner cannot genuinely receive Christ as Savior without being convicted of his sin and misery, his own emptiness and helplessness, and his just desert of eternal condemnation. These convictions must therefore be implied in some way in what is wrought in the soul. But nothing proves that all these things must be worked out in the soul in a series of clearly distinct, separate, observable steps — each one plain and visible — in every genuinely converted person. On the contrary, as Thomas Shepard observed, sometimes the change made in a believer at the first work of grace is like a confused chaos — the person simply cannot make sense of what is happening in them. The manner in which the Spirit proceeds in those who are

born of the Spirit is often deeply mysterious and untraceable. We can hear, as it were, the sound of the wind — the effects are visible — but no one can tell where it came from or where it is going. It is often as difficult to trace the Spirit's way in the new birth as in the natural birth (Ecclesiastes 11:5): 'Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.' The implanting of a principle of grace in the soul is compared in Scripture to the conception of Christ in the womb (Galatians 4:19). This is why the church is called Christ's mother (Song of Solomon 3:11), and every individual believer as well (Matthew 12:49-50). The conception of Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit appears to be a designed parallel to the conception of Christ in the soul of a believer by the power of that same Spirit. And we cannot trace the Spirit's way, or know how the life grows, whether in the womb or in the heart that conceives this holy new life. The new creature may use the words of Psalm 139:14-15: 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret.' Concerning the generation of Christ — both in His own person and in the hearts of His people — it may be said as in Isaiah 53:8: 'Who can declare His generation?' We do not know the works of God who makes all things. It is God's glory to conceal a matter (Proverbs 25:2), and to have His paths in the mighty waters where His footsteps cannot be traced. This is especially true of His works in the Spirit's operations on the hearts of people, which are the highest of all His works. Therefore it is written (Isaiah 40:13): 'Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has

taught Him?' It is to be feared that some have gone too far in trying to direct the Spirit of the Lord — mapping out His footsteps and limiting Him to certain fixed steps and methods. Experience plainly shows that the Spirit is unsearchable and untraceable in His method of working in some of the best of Christians during their conversion. Nor does the Spirit follow a particular established scheme, in clearly discernible steps, anywhere near as often as people imagine. A preconceived scheme of what must happen — already received and established by common opinion — has a vast and largely unnoticed influence in shaping how people understand and describe the steps and method of their own experience. I know well how this works, having had much opportunity to observe it. Very often at first, people's experiences look like a confused chaos, as Shepard puts it. But then those parts of their experience that most closely resemble the particular steps being insisted upon are selected out and focused on. These are dwelt upon in their thoughts, and these are the parts told and retold in the account they give. These elements grow brighter and clearer in their minds over time, while what does not fit the scheme grows more obscure and is quietly set aside. What they have experienced is unconsciously adjusted until it conforms to the accepted pattern. And it becomes natural for ministers who insist on distinctness and clarity of method to do the same when dealing with those under their care. Yet so much of the Spirit's work has been observable in recent times that those who have dealt extensively with souls — and are not blinded by thick layers of prejudice — must recognize that the Spirit is so remarkably varied in how He operates that in many cases it is simply impossible to trace His way.

What we must principally attend to, in examining our own state or in guiding others, is the nature of the effect God has brought about in the soul. As for the steps the Spirit took to produce that effect, we may leave those to Him. Scripture repeatedly tells us to examine ourselves by the nature of the fruits of the Spirit — never by the Spirit's method of producing them. Many make a serious mistake in their understanding of what a clear work of conversion looks like. They call a work clear when the successive steps and method of experience are clear. But the truly clearest work is not where the order of what was done is most visible — it is where the spiritual and divine nature of the work itself, and the effect produced, is most clearly seen.

Ninth sign that proves nothing: religious affections lead a person to spend much time in religious activities and to be zealously engaged in the outward duties of worship.

It has been entirely unreasonably used, in recent times, as an argument against the religious affections some have experienced — that they spend so much time in reading, praying, singing, hearing sermons, and the like. Scripture plainly shows that true grace tends to cause people to delight greatly in such religious exercises. True grace had this effect on Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:37): 'She never left the temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers.' Grace had this effect on the early Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46-47): 'Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God.' Grace made Daniel delight in the duty of prayer and led him to observe it faithfully three times a day, as it also did David (Psalm 55:17): 'Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain

and murmur, and He will hear my voice.' Grace makes the saints delight in singing praises to God (Psalm 135:3): 'Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.' And Psalm 147:1: 'Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and praise is beautiful.' Grace also causes them to delight in hearing God's Word preached, making the gospel a joyful sound to them (Psalm 89:15), and making beautiful the feet of those who announce the good news (Isaiah 52:7): 'How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news.' It makes them love God's public worship (Psalm 26:8): 'O Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.' And Psalm 27:4: 'One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.' And Psalm 84:1-2, 10: 'How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord... a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside.'

This is the nature of true grace. But on the other hand, a person being inclined to be abundantly and zealously engaged in the outward exercises of religion, spending much time in them, is no certain evidence of grace — because such a disposition is found in many who have no grace. So it was with the Israelites of old, whose worship was detestable to God: they attended new moons, Sabbaths, and appointed assemblies, spread out their hands, and offered many prayers (Isaiah 1:12-15). So it was with the Pharisees: they made long prayers and fasted twice a week. False religion can cause people to pray loudly and earnestly (Isaiah 58:4): 'You shall not fast as you do today, making your voice heard on high.'

Religion that is not spiritual and saving can cause people to delight in religious duties and ordinances (Isaiah 58:2): 'Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, as a nation that has done righteousness and has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions; they delight in the nearness of God.' It can cause delight in hearing the Word of God preached, as with Ezekiel's hearers (Ezekiel 33:31-32): 'They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them.' So it was with Herod, who 'used to enjoy listening to' John the Baptist (Mark 6:20). So it was with others of John's hearers who 'were willing to rejoice for a while in his light' (John 5:35). And so the stony-ground hearers 'received the word with joy' (Matthew 13:20).

Experience shows that people motivated by false religion may be inclined to be extraordinarily active in the outward exercises of religion — even giving themselves over to them and devoting almost their entire time to them. A type of person was once very common in the Roman Catholic Church, known as recluses, who forsook the world and completely abandoned human society, shutting themselves in a small cell with a vow never to leave it or see another human face (except in case of illness), spending all their days in devotional exercises and communion with God. There were also in ancient times great numbers of people known as hermits and anchorites who left the world to spend all their days in remote deserts, giving themselves over to religious contemplation and de-

votional practice — some with no shelter but the caves and vaults of mountains, and no food but what the earth produced on its own. I once lived for many months next door to a Jewish man — the houses sharing a wall — and had extensive opportunity to observe him daily. He appeared to me to be the most devout person I had ever seen in my life, spending a great part of his time in acts of devotion at his east-facing window which opened next to mine, appearing intensely engaged — not only throughout the day, but sometimes through entire nights.

Tenth sign that proves nothing: religious affections strongly incline people to praise and glorify God with their mouths. This is implied in what was just observed about abundant engagement in the outward exercises of religion, and was hinted at earlier. But because many seem to regard it as a bright mark of gracious affection when a person is greatly disposed to praise and magnify God — when their mouth is full of His praises and they earnestly call on others to extol and glorify Him — this deserves more specific attention.

No Christian will use this disposition as an argument against a person. Nor can it reasonably be treated as evidence in a person's favor — given what has already been observed and shown: that people without grace may have strong affections toward God and Christ, that these strong affections tend to fill their mouths and incline them to speak much and very earnestly about what moves them, and that every kind of gracious affection has its counterfeits. It becomes even more evident that this is no certain sign of grace when we consider the examples Scripture gives of graceless people doing the very same thing. We often encounter this among the crowd that was present when Christ preached and worked miracles

(Mark 2:12): 'And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."' Similarly in Matthew 9:8 and Luke 5:26. Also Matthew 15:31: 'So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.' When Christ raised the son of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:16 tells us: 'Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!"' We also read of people glorifying Christ and speaking of Him in the highest terms (Luke 4:15): 'He was teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.' And how the crowds praised Him with loud voices crying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord' — this just before He was crucified! After Christ's ascension, when the apostles healed the lame man, we read that 'all the people were glorifying God for what had happened' (Acts 4:21). When the Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch heard from Paul and Barnabas that God would set aside the Jews and bring the Gentiles in their place, they were moved by this kindness of God toward the Gentiles and glorified the word of the Lord. But not all who did so were true believers — only a certain number among them, as the account makes clear (Acts 13:48): 'When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.' Long before this, the Israelites at the Red Sea sang His praises — and then quickly forgot His works. And Scripture even foretells that false professors and actual enemies of true religion will show eagerness to glorify God (Isaiah 66:5):

'Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word: "Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name's sake, have said, "Let the Lord be glorified, so that we may see your joy.'""

It is also no certain sign that a person has been genuinely affected by grace if, in the midst of their hope and comfort, they are greatly moved by God's undeserved kindness to one so unworthy as themselves, and seem to magnify and extol grace. People who still harbor unmortified pride and enmity against God may, when they imagine they have received extraordinary favor from God, cry out about their own unworthiness and magnify God's undeserved goodness — from no deeper sense of their guilt and from no higher principle than Saul had. Saul still harbored unbroken pride and enmity against David, and yet he was brought — though a king — to acknowledge his sin, crying out, 'I have played the fool, I have erred greatly,' and with great feeling and admiration to magnify David's undeserved and remarkable kindness to him (1 Samuel 24:16-19; 26:21). And from no higher principle than that which moved Nebuchadnezzar when he was affected by God's dealings with him — praising, exalting, and honoring the King of heaven, both he and Darius calling on all nations to praise God (Daniel 3:28-30; 4:1-3, 34-35, 37; 6:25-27).

Eleventh sign that proves nothing: affections make the person who has them intensely confident that what they are experiencing is divine and that their spiritual state is good.

Some argue against a person on the grounds that they must be deluded if they claim to be assured of their good spiritual state, carried beyond all doubting of God's favor. They hold that there is no such thing to be expected in the church of God as a full and absolute assurance of hope — except perhaps in extraordinary cir-

cumstances, such as when facing martyrdom. This view stands against the doctrine of Protestants as maintained by their most celebrated writers against the Catholics, and against the plain testimony of Scripture. It is clear that assurance was common among the saints described in Scripture. God revealed and confirmed His special favor in the plainest and most certain terms to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, and others. Job speaks of his own sincerity and uprightness with the greatest imaginable confidence, repeatedly calling on God to witness to it, and says plainly: 'As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold' (Job 19:25-27). David throughout the Psalms speaks almost everywhere without hesitation and in the most direct way of God as his God — glorying in Him as his portion and heritage, his rock and confidence, his shield, salvation, and stronghold, and the like. Hezekiah appeals to God as one who knew that he had walked before Him in truth and with a wholehearted commitment (2 Kings 20:3). In His final conversation with the eleven disciples — recorded in John 14, 15, and 16, and serving as something like Christ's last will and testament to His disciples and to His whole church — Jesus repeatedly declares His special and everlasting love for them in the plainest and most positive terms. He promises them a future share in His glory in the most absolute terms, and He tells them He does so in order that their joy may be full (John 15:11): 'These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.' And at the close of that whole discourse (John 16:33): 'These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribula-

tion, but take courage; I have overcome the world.' Christ was not afraid of speaking too plainly and directly to them. He had no desire to leave them in the slightest uncertainty. He concluded that last discourse with a prayer offered in their presence, in which He spoke definitively to His Father about all eleven disciples — that they had all come to saving knowledge of Him, believed in Him, received and kept His word, that they were not of the world, that He had sanctified Himself for their sake, and that His will was for them to be with Him in His glory. He said He spoke these things in His prayer so that His joy might be made complete in them (verse 13). From all this it is evident that it is consistent with Christ's purposes and His ongoing ordering of things in His church that abundant and sufficient provision should be made for His saints to have full assurance of their future glory.

The apostle Paul speaks throughout all his letters in an assured tone — always positively of his special relationship to Christ his Lord, Master, and Redeemer, and of his confident expectation of the future reward. The passages that could be cited are too many to count; I will mention just three or four. Galatians 2:20: 'Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.' Philippians 1:21: 'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.' 2 Timothy 1:12: 'I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.' 2 Timothy 4:7-8: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.'

The nature of the covenant of grace, and God's stated purposes in its design and arrangement, plainly show that it is God's intention to make full provision for the saints to have assured hope of eternal life while living here on earth. Everything in that covenant is ordered and arranged so that everything might be made certain on God's part. The covenant is ordered in all things and is sure. The promises are very full and repeatedly given, presented in many forms, confirmed by many witnesses and many seals, and God has confirmed His promises with an oath. God's stated purpose in all of this is that the heirs of the promises might have an unshaken hope and full joy in assurance of their future glory (Hebrews 6:17-18): 'In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.' But all of this would be pointless for the purpose of the saints' strong consolation and hope of future glory, if a person could not ordinarily come to know their own interest in those promises. For no matter how certain God's promises and oaths may be, they cannot produce strong hope and comfort in any particular person beyond what that person can know of their own share in them. And all the provision made in Jesus Christ for believers to be perfect in conscience — as indicated in Hebrews 9:9 — would be in vain if assurance of freedom from the guilt of sin could not actually be obtained.

It further appears that assurance is not only attainable in extraordinary cases, since all Christians are directed to give every effort to make their calling and election sure, and are shown how

they may do so (2 Peter 1:5-8). It is spoken of as something very unbecoming of Christians — evidence of something genuinely wrong — not to know whether Christ is in them (2 Corinthians 13:5): 'Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — unless indeed you fail the test?' It is also implied that it reflects seriously blameworthy negligence for a Christian to live the Christian life in a way that leaves the reward uncertain (1 Corinthians 9:26): 'Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim.' And beyond all this, it is clear that Christians knowing their own interest in the saving benefits of Christianity is something ordinarily attainable, because the apostles tell us by what means Christians — not only apostles and martyrs — typically came to know this (1 Corinthians 2:12): 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.' And 1 John 2:3: 'By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.' Verse 5: 'By this we know that we are in Him.' 1 John 3:14: 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.' Verse 19: 'By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him.' Verse 24: 'We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.' So also 1 John 4:13; 5:2; and verse 19.

It is therefore very unreasonable to conclude that people are hypocrites and their affections wrong simply because they appear to have no doubt about their own salvation and the affections they experience seem to have driven out all fear of hell.

On the other hand, it is no sufficient reason to conclude that people are genuine believers and their affections gracious simply because those affections are accompanied by intense confidence that their state is good and their affections divine. Nothing can be certainly concluded from such confidence, no matter how great or strong it appears. If we see a man who boldly addresses God as his Father, who commonly speaks in the most bold, familiar, and claiming language in prayer — 'My Father, my dear Redeemer, my sweet Savior, my Beloved' — and who habitually makes the most confident assertions before others about the goodness of his state: 'I know certainly that God is my Father; I know as surely as there is a God in heaven that He is my God; I know I will go to heaven as well as if I were there; I know that God is now manifesting Himself to my soul and smiling upon me' — and who appears to have settled the question of his own spiritual state once for all, treating it as beyond doubt, and who despises anyone who so much as suggests there might be reason for doubt or self-examination — none of this is any sign at all that things actually are as he is so confident they are. This kind of overbearing, forceful, and aggressive confidence — which loves to put itself on display before others with the most glaring show — does not have the character of true Christian assurance. It has more the spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted they were saints — indeed, the most distinguished of saints — and who boldly approached God and lifted their eyes to thank Him for the great distinction He had placed between them and other men. When Christ suggested they were blind and graceless, they dismissed the idea (John 9:40): "Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" If they had had more of the spirit of the tax

collector alongside their confidence — who, in a deep sense of his own unworthiness, stood far off, would not even lift his eyes toward heaven, but beat his breast and cried out that he was a sinner — their confidence would have looked far more like the confidence of one who humbly trusts and hopes in Christ and has no confidence in himself.

When we consider what the hearts of natural people are — what principles rule them, what blindness and self-deception, what self-flattery, self-promotion, and self-confidence reign there — we need not be at all surprised that their high opinion of themselves and confidence in their happy condition can be as immovable as mountains and as fierce as a storm. This is what happens once conscience is blinded and conviction silenced by false and heightened affections, and those self-regarding principles are let loose, fed, and stirred up by false joys and comforts — excited by pleasing imaginations impressed by Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light.

Once a hypocrite is settled in a false hope, he does not face those things that often cause genuine believers to question their hope. First, he does not have the cautious spirit of the true believer, the deep sense of how much depends on having a solid foundation, or the dread of being deceived. True comfort increases alertness and care in a true believer, along with a vivid awareness of how weighty a thing it is to stand before an infinitely holy, just, and all-knowing Judge. But false comfort puts an end to all these things and deeply dulls the mind. Second, the hypocrite does not know his own spiritual blindness or the deceitfulness of his own heart, and he does not have the lowly view of his own understanding that a true believer has. Those who are deceived by false spiri-

tual experiences and affections are consistently proud of their spiritual insight and understanding. Third, Satan does not attack the hypocrite's hope as he attacks the hope of a true believer. Satan is a great enemy to genuine Christian hope — not only because it greatly comforts the one who has it, but because it is something holy and heavenly by nature, tending powerfully to cultivate and strengthen grace in the heart and motivate serious and diligent Christian living. But he is no enemy to the hypocrite's hope, which above all other things secures his grip on the one who holds it. A hypocrite may maintain his hope without opposition for as long as he lives — Satan never disturbing it or attempting to disturb it. But there is perhaps no true Christian whose hope Satan does not attack. Satan assaulted Christ Himself on this very point — whether He was the Son of God. The servant is not above his master, nor the disciple above his Lord. It is enough for the most privileged disciple to be treated as his master was. Fourth, the person with a false hope does not have the same sight of his own corruption that the true believer has. A true Christian has ten times more to deal with regarding his own heart and its corruptions than a hypocrite does. The sins of his heart and life appear to him in their darkness — they look dreadful — and it often seems a profound mystery that any grace could exist alongside such corruption, or be found in such a heart. But false hope conceals corruption and covers it over completely, so that the hypocrite looks clean and bright in his own eyes.

There are two kinds of hypocrites. The first are those deceived by their outward morality and external religion — many of whom are committed Arminians in their doctrine of justification. The second are those deceived by false spiritual experiences and ele-

vated states — who often speak against human effort and self-righteousness, and talk much about free grace, while at the same time making a righteousness out of their spiritual experiences and their sense of humiliation, using these to lift themselves to heaven. Thomas Shepard, in his exposition of the parable of the ten virgins, distinguishes these two kinds as legal and evangelical hypocrites, and often speaks of the latter as the worse of the two. And it is clearly the case that the latter are typically far more confident in their hope and far more resistant to being disabused of it. I have scarcely known in my life of an instance where such a person was undeceived. The chief basis for many of their confidence is the very same kind of impressions and supposed revelations — sometimes accompanied by scripture texts, sometimes not — that many people have recently had concerning future events. They call these impressions about their spiritual state the witness of the Spirit, entirely misunderstanding what the witness of the Spirit actually is, as I will explain later. Those who have had visions and impressions about other things have generally received them about things they intensely desired. It is no wonder that people who give weight to such things have the same kind of impressions about their own eternal salvation — revealing to them that their sins are forgiven, that their names are written in the book of life, that they stand in high favor with God — especially when they eagerly seek, expect, and wait for evidence of their election and salvation through this means, as the surest and most glorious evidence available. Nor is it any wonder that when they receive such a supposed revelation about their spiritual state, it raises their confidence to the highest degree. Experience abundantly confirms that those who are led astray by impressions and imagined revelations are extremely con-

fidant. They believe the great God Himself has declared these things to them, and since they have His immediate testimony, total confidence appears to them the highest virtue. So they boldly say, 'I know this or that — I know it certainly — I am as sure as that I exist,' and the like, and they dismiss all argument or examination. Above all, it is easy to understand why impressions and impulses about something so pleasing, so flattering to their self-love and pride — such as being God's dear children, specially distinguished from most of the world in His favor — would make them intensely confident, especially when combined with high affections that they regard as the most eminent exercises of grace. I have known of several people who had an intense desire for something of a temporal nature — driven by a passionate longing — who pursued what they wanted through great difficulty and many discouraging setbacks, and finally received an impression or supposed revelation that they would obtain what they sought. They treated this as a sure promise from God Most High, which made them foolishly and stubbornly confident against all rational evidence to the contrary and all circumstances working against them. There is nothing preventing people who are seeking their salvation from being deceived by the very same kind of delusive impressions, and from being made just as confident in the same way.

The confidence of many of this kind of hypocrite — what Shepard calls evangelical hypocrites — is like the confidence of certain delusional people who believe they are kings. They will maintain it against all reason and evidence. In one sense, this confidence is far more unshakeable than a truly gracious assurance. A true assurance is sustained only by the soul being kept in a holy state and grace being actively exercised. If the exercises of grace

decline significantly and the Christian falls into a spiritually dead state, he loses his assurance. But the confidence of the hypocrite is not shaken by sin. Some of them maintain their boldness and hope in the most corrupt and wicked conditions — which is itself a sure sign of their delusion.

I cannot help but observe here that there are certain doctrines often preached to people that need to be delivered with more care and explanation than they frequently receive. As many people understand them, these doctrines tend powerfully to reinforce the delusion and false confidence of hypocrites. The doctrines I have in mind are these: Christians living by faith, not by sight; giving glory to God by trusting Him in the dark; living on Christ rather than on their experiences; not making their good spiritual frames the foundation of their faith. These are excellent and important doctrines when rightly understood, but corrupt and destructive as many understand them. Scripture speaks of living or walking by faith and not by sight in only one sense: being governed by regard for eternal, unseen things that are the objects of faith, rather than by temporal, visible things — believing things revealed that we have never seen with physical eyes, and living by faith in the promise of things not yet received or seen, with no understanding of how they can come about. This is easily confirmed by any survey of the scriptures that contrast faith with sight, such as 2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7; Hebrews 11:1, 8, 13, 17, 27, 29; Romans 8:24; John 20:29. But as many understand it, this doctrine means that Christians should firmly believe and trust in Christ without any spiritual sight or light — even while in a cold, dead spiritual state, currently having no spiritual experience or sense of God's presence. Certainly it is the duty of those in that darkness to come out

of it and into light and believe. But to urge them to confidently trust in Christ while remaining without any spiritual light or sight is anti-scriptural and unreasonable. Scripture knows nothing of a faith in Christ — one that is truly the work of God — that is not grounded in a spiritual sight of Christ. The faith in Christ that accompanies a title to everlasting life involves 'looking to the Son and believing in Him' (John 6:40). True faith in Christ is never exercised beyond the degree to which a person 'beholds as in a mirror the glory of the Lord' and has 'the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6). Those in whose minds 'the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' does not shine — they do not believe (2 Corinthians 4:4). Faith without spiritual light is not the faith of children of light and of the day — it is the presumption of children of darkness. Therefore, pressing people to believe without any spiritual light or sight works powerfully to advance the delusions of the prince of darkness. People not only cannot exercise faith without some spiritual light — they can exercise faith only in exact proportion to the spiritual light they have. People will trust God no further than they know Him, and they cannot exercise faith in Him one degree beyond the measure in which they see His fullness and faithfulness in active experience. Nor can they exercise trust in God any further than they are in a gracious spiritual state. Those who are in a cold and carnal condition ought indeed to trust God — because doing so would be the very same thing as coming out of that condition and turning to God. But to exhort people to confidently trust in God and so hold on to their hope and peace while they remain in an ungracious state is effectively to exhort them to trust in God without a gracious trust. And what is that but wicked presumption? It is

just as impossible for people to have a strong and living trust in God when they have no lively exercises of grace and no conscious Christian experience, as it is to be in the lively exercise of grace without actually exercising grace.

It is true that it is the duty of God's people to trust in Him when in darkness — and to continue trusting even while remaining in a certain kind of darkness. Specifically, they ought to trust God when His providential dealings are dark and appear as though He has forsaken them, when He seems not to answer their prayers, when many threatening circumstances surround them and seem about to overwhelm them, when all events seem to work against them and all circumstances make it hard to see how His promises can possibly be fulfilled. In these situations, God must be trusted out of sight — that is, when we cannot see how He could fulfill His Word, when everything except His bare Word makes it look unlikely, so that believing requires hoping against hope. This is how the ancient patriarchs, Job, the psalmists, Jeremiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and the apostle Paul all gave glory to God by trusting Him in the dark. And we have many examples of this glorious, victorious faith in Hebrews 11. But how different a thing this is from trusting in God without spiritual sight, while at the same time being in a cold and worldly spiritual state!

There is also such a thing as spiritual light coming into the soul in one way when it is not present in another. Because of this, there is such a thing as saints trusting in God and knowing their good spiritual state even when lacking certain kinds of experience. For instance, they may have clear views of God's sufficiency and faithfulness, and so confidently trust in Him and know that they are

His children — while at the same time not having the same clear and sweet sense of His love that they have at other times. This was true of Christ Himself in His final sufferings. They may also have views of much of God's sovereignty, holiness, and all-sufficiency that enable them to submit quietly to Him and exercise a sweet and deeply encouraging hope in God's fullness — even when they are not fully assured of their own good spiritual state. But how different these things are from confidently trusting in God without any spiritual light or experience!

Those who insist on people living by faith when they have no spiritual experience and are in very poor spiritual condition also hold badly confused notions of what faith is. What they mean by faith is believing that one is in a good spiritual state. As a result, they treat it as a dreadful sin for a person to doubt their own state, regardless of what spiritual condition they are in or what wicked things they may be doing — because they consider such doubt the great and heinous sin of unbelief. In their view, the best person and the one who honors God most is the one who maintains the most confident and unshakeable hope about his good spiritual state when he has the least light or experience — that is, when he is in the worst and most sinful condition — because this, they say, is a sign that he is strong in faith, giving glory to God, and hoping against hope. But from what Bible do they draw this idea that faith is a person's confident belief that he is in a good spiritual state? If that is faith, then the Pharisees possessed faith to an exceptional degree — some of whom Christ teaches committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. Scripture presents faith as what brings a person into a good spiritual state. Therefore faith cannot be the same thing as believing that one is already in such a state.

To suppose that faith consists in believing that one is in a good spiritual state is effectively the same as supposing that faith consists in believing that one has faith — believing that one believes.

It is true that doubting one's spiritual state may in several ways arise from unbelief. It may arise from unbelief in this sense: because a person has so little faith, they have so little evidence of their good spiritual state. If they had more experience of faith in action, and therefore more experience of grace actually being exercised, they would have clearer evidence that their state was good, and their doubts would be resolved. Doubting one's state may also arise from unbelief in this way: when, even though there are many things that give good evidence of a work of grace, a person still doubts greatly whether they are truly in a state of favor with God — because it is they, someone so unworthy who has done so much to provoke God's anger. In such a case their doubt arises from unbelief in that it arises from a failure to sufficiently grasp and rest on the infinite riches of God's grace and the sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners. Doubts may also arise from unbelief when a person doubts because of the mysterious nature of God's dealings with them and cannot reconcile those dealings with God's love for them. Or when they doubt whether they have any share in the promises, because circumstances make those promises look so unlikely to be fulfilled and the obstacles seem many and great. Such doubting arises from a failure to depend on God's almighty power and His wisdom and knowledge as infinitely above their own. Yet in all these cases, a person's unbelief and their doubting of their state are not the same thing — even though one arises from the other.

People may be genuinely at fault for doubting their spiritual state on the last-mentioned grounds — and they may be at fault for having so little grace and so little present exercise and experience of it to serve as evidence that their state is good. People are certainly to blame for falling into a cold and carnal spiritual condition. But when they are in such a condition, when they have no conscious experience of the exercises of grace — on the contrary, when they are very much under the power of their sinful desires and an unchristian spirit — they are not to blame for doubting their state. It is just as impossible in the nature of things for holy, Christian hope to be kept alive in its clarity and strength in such circumstances, as it is to keep a room lit when the candle has been extinguished, or to maintain bright sunshine in the air when the sun has gone down. Past spiritual experiences, when overshadowed by present prevailing sin and corruption, will never keep a gracious confidence and assurance alive — that assurance will weaken and fade just as inevitably as a child weakened by repeated blows to the head. Nor is it to be lamented that a person doubts their spiritual state in such circumstances. On the contrary, it is desirable and altogether fitting that they should. This is consistent with the wise and gracious arrangement God has established. God has so ordered things in His dealings with His people that when love decays and its exercises fail or weaken, fear arises — for in that condition they need it to restrain them from sin, to move them to care for their souls, and to stir up watchfulness and diligence in the Christian life. But God has also arranged that when love rises and is vigorously active, fear vanishes and is driven away — for then they do not need it, having a higher and more excellent principle at work to restrain them from sin and drive them in their

duty. There are only two principles capable of producing a truly conscientious life in human nature: fear and love. If one does not increase as the other declines, God's people would, when falling into cold and carnal states — when love is asleep — be dangerously exposed. Therefore God has wisely ordained that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall like the two sides of a scale: when one rises, the other falls. As light and darkness necessarily and unavoidably alternate — if light prevails, darkness recedes by exactly that measure; if light fades, darkness gains by exactly that measure — so it is in the heart of a child of God. If divine love grows cold and sinful desire prevails, light and joy fade, and dark fear and doubt arise. If divine love prevails and becomes vigorously active, it brings the brightness of hope, and drives away sinful desire and fear along with it. Love is the spirit of adoption — the childlike principle. If it slumbers, people fall under fear, which is the spirit of bondage, the legal principle — and the reverse is also true. And if the spirit of adoption is carried to a great height, it completely drives away all fear and produces full assurance, in keeping with the apostle's words (1 John 4:18): 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.' These two opposing principles of sinful desire and holy love produce hope and fear in God's children's hearts in proportion to how much each prevails — when left to their own natural influence, without something external or unusual interfering, such as an affliction of melancholy, ignorance, prejudices from upbringing, wrong teaching, or particular temptations, and so on.

Fear is driven out by the Spirit of God in no other way than by love prevailing, and it is never sustained by His Spirit when love is asleep. In such a time, all the believer's self-examination and

dwelling on past experiences in order to restore peace and gain assurance will be in vain. For it is contrary to the nature of things, as God has constituted them, that a person should have assurance at such a time.

Those who exhort others to be confident in their hope while in spiritual darkness — under the idea of living by faith and not by sight, trusting God in the dark, and living on Christ rather than on experiences — and who warn them not to doubt their spiritual state lest they commit the dreadful sin of unbelief, directly work against God's wise and gracious constitution of things. This approach tends to establish the most presumptuous hypocrites in their delusion and to prevent them from ever examining their state — no matter how much wickedness rages and rules in their hearts and prevails in their lives — under the notion that they are honoring God by hoping against hope and trusting in Him when things look very dark. The harm done in this way has undoubtedly been immense.

People cannot be said to be living on their experiences rather than on Christ and His grace simply because they use those experiences as evidence. Those experiences are, in fact, the only evidence they have. But they may properly be said to live on their experiences when they make a righteousness of them — when, instead of keeping their eyes on God's glory and Christ's excellence, they turn their eyes inward onto themselves, entertaining their minds by contemplating their own spiritual attainments, their high experiences, and the remarkable things they have encountered. In this state they are bright and beautiful in their own eyes, feeling rich and well-supplied, believing that God esteems them as admirably as they esteem themselves. This is living on experiences rather

than on Christ, and it is more abominable in God's sight than the gross immorality of those who make no pretense of religion at all. But this is a very different thing from simply using one's experiences as evidence of an interest in a glorious Redeemer.

But to return from this digression — let me mention one more thing under the general subject I have been addressing.

Twelfth sign that proves nothing: the outward expressions of affections, and the accounts people give of them, are very moving and pleasing to genuinely godly people and strongly win their approval and their hearts.

True believers do not possess a spirit of discernment so keen that they can reliably determine who is genuinely godly and who is not. Though they know from personal experience what true religion is in its internal exercises, those internal exercises are not something they can feel or see in another person's heart. What falls within their observation in others is only outward expressions and appearances. And Scripture plainly implies that this way of judging what is in a person by outward appearances is at best uncertain and prone to deception (1 Samuel 16:7): 'The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' And Isaiah 11:3: 'He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear.' Those who are quick and decisive in pronouncing on the spiritual state of others — boasting of their unusual ability to discern and distinguish in these grave matters, as though everything were open and transparent to them — are commonly poor judges and dangerous advisors in matters of the soul. They reveal one of three things: either they have had very little experience, or they are people of weak judg-

ment, or they have a high degree of pride and self-confidence, and therefore of self-ignorance. Wise and experienced people will proceed with great caution in such a matter.

When there are many signs of genuine piety in others, it is the duty of believers to receive them warmly into their fellowship, to love them and rejoice in them as brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet even the best of people can be deceived when the appearances seem exceedingly clear and bright — so much so as to completely win their approval and conquer their hearts. It has been common in the church of God throughout history for those who shine brightly as professors of faith, and who are received as eminent saints among the saints, to fall away and come to nothing. This should not surprise us, given what has already been observed about what can appear in people who are entirely without grace. All of these things can be present in a person together, and yet there may not be a spark of grace in their heart. They may have many different kinds of religious affections at once — a kind of affection toward God that closely resembles genuine love, a kind of love for fellow believers, great expressions of wonder at God's perfections and works, sorrow for sin, reverence, submission, self-abasement, gratitude, joy, religious longing, and zeal for the advancement of religion and the good of souls. These affections may come after great spiritual awakenings and conviction of conscience, with all the outward appearances of a genuine work of humbling. Counterfeit love and joy and other affections may seem to follow these and one another in exactly the same order commonly observable in the holy affections of true converts. These religious affections may be carried to a great height, producing abundant tears — even overwhelming the physical constitution of those

who have them — and may make them warm, fervent, and freely expressive in speaking about the things of God, inclining them to speak about these things abundantly. They may come with many sweet scripture texts and precious promises brought with great force to the mind, and may incline them to praise and glorify God very fervently with their mouths, to call earnestly on others to praise Him, crying out about their own unworthiness and extolling free grace. They may further incline them to devote themselves generously to the outward duties of religion such as prayer, hearing the preached Word, singing, and religious conversation. And all of this may be accompanied by what looks strikingly like Christian assurance at its highest — when the saints mount up like eagles, above all darkness and doubt. I believe it has been made clear that all these things can be present, and yet there may be nothing beyond the common operations of the Spirit of God, combined with the delusions of Satan and the wicked and deceitful heart. I may add that all of these things may be accompanied by a pleasant natural temperament, a solid doctrinal knowledge of religion, a long familiarity with the way believers speak about their affections and experiences, and a natural skill in adapting their expressions and manner of speaking to the expectations and sensibilities of their hearers — along with a gracious and appealing way of speaking and behaving, shaped by a good upbringing. How great, then, may the outward resemblance be between a hypocrite and a true believer in all outward expressions and appearances! Surely it is the glorious privilege of the omniscient God, as the great searcher of hearts, to be able to separate the sheep from the goats.

And what presumptuous arrogance it is for poor, fallible, limited human beings to claim they can determine who is truly sincere and upright before God, and who is not!

Many people place great weight on this and take it as a reliable way of judging others' genuine piety — not only when those others tell a plausible account, but specifically when, in describing their experiences, they speak in a way that is 'felt' by the listener: that is, when their account seems to resonate with the listener's own experience, when the listener's heart is touched, moved, and delighted by what they hear, and drawn out toward the speaker in warm love. But these signs do not carry the certainty or warrant that many suppose. A true believer greatly delights in holiness — it is a most beautiful thing to him. And God's work of savingly renewing and making holy and happy a poor, once-perishing soul appears to him as a most glorious work. No wonder, then, that his heart is touched and greatly moved when he hears another give a plausible account of this work having been done in his own heart, and when he sees in that person what appears to be the evidence of holiness — whether those pleasing appearances have any reality behind them or not. And if the person uses the same words commonly used to express the affections of true believers, and describes many things following one another in an order consistent with the experience of the one listening, and speaks freely and boldly and with an air of assurance — no wonder the listener thinks the experiences resonate with his own. And if, beyond all this, the person speaks with much warmth and affection in telling his account — and above all, if he shows great personal affection toward the very person he is speaking to, like the affection the Galatians showed toward the apostle Paul — these things will naturally have a power-

ful effect on the listener's heart and throw open the doors of his goodwill toward the speaker. David speaks as one who had felt Ahithophel's conversation and had once found a sweet savor and pleasure in it. This is why his surprise and grief when Ahithophel fell was so overwhelming — nearly more than he could bear (Psalm 55:12-14): 'For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it... But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; we who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng.'

Those who profess religion — especially those who do so during a time of outpouring of God's Spirit — are like the blossoms in spring. There are vast numbers of them on the trees, and all of them look beautiful and full of promise. Yet a great many of them never become anything. Many of those that will, before long, wither up and fall off still look, for a time, just as lovely and bright as the ones that will bear fruit. Not only do they look the same, they even smell sweet and give off a pleasant fragrance, so that none of our senses can reliably tell apart the blossoms that carry the hidden life that will show itself in fruit, and that have the inward substance and strength that will enable them to bear under the hot summer sun that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit that comes later — not the beautiful color and fragrance of the blossom — by which we must judge. Likewise, new converts in their talk about the things of religion may appear excellent and be very pleasing to hear, and believers may think they are speaking from genuine experience. They may find the talk deeply meaningful and imagine they perceive a divine quality in it — and yet it may all come to nothing.

It is remarkable how reluctant people are to be satisfied with the guidelines and directions Christ has given them, insisting instead on following other rules of their own devising that seem to them wiser and more reliable. I know of no directions Christ ever gave more plainly than the rule for judging others' sincerity — that we are to judge the tree chiefly by its fruit. But this will not satisfy people; other methods are invented that seem more discerning and certain. And the consequences of setting human wisdom above the wisdom of Christ have been deeply harmful. I believe many believers have gone far out of the path of Christ's Word in this regard, and some of them have been brought back to it only through severe and painful discipline. But many things that have appeared recently — and are appearing now — should convince us that, as a rule, those who have gone furthest in this direction, who have been most proud of their ability to discern, and who have been most quick, decisive, and sweeping in pronouncing on the spiritual state of others' souls, have been hypocrites who knew nothing of true religion.

In the parable of the wheat and weeds it says (Matthew 13:26): 'But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.' This suggests, as John Flavel observes, that the weeds were not discernible or distinguishable from the wheat until that point. Flavel cites Jerome's observation that wheat and weeds are so alike until the wheat stalk produces the grain that it is next to impossible to tell them apart. Flavel then adds: however difficult it may be to distinguish wheat from weeds by sight, the eye can far more easily distinguish them than the sharpest human eye can distinguish between saving grace and common grace. For every saving grace in the true believer has its counterfeit in the hypocrite —

counterfeits which even a spiritual and highly discerning eye can easily mistake for the genuine and saving effects of the sanctifying Spirit.

As it is the grain — the fruit — that distinguishes wheat from weeds, so this is the true test that the Judge standing at the passages of the Jordan uses to distinguish those who shall cross into the true Canaan from those who shall be slain at the crossing. The Hebrew word 'shibboleth' itself means an ear of grain. Perhaps the fuller pronunciation — 'Shibboleth' — by the friends of Jephthah represents a full, grain-bearing ear, picturing the fruit of the friends of Christ, the reality to which Jephthah pointed. And the thinner pronunciation — 'Sibboleth' — by the Ephraimites, his enemies, represents their empty ears, picturing the outward show of religion in hypocrites, without substance or fruit. This is consistent with the doctrine abundantly taught in Scripture: that He who judges those who pass through death — determining whether they have a right to enter the heavenly Canaan or whether they should be condemned — will judge every person according to his works.

We are taught the same thing by the guidelines given to the priests for discerning leprosy. In many cases it was impossible for the priest to determine from a single examination of the outward appearances whether a person had leprosy or was clean. He had to wait and observe what the appearance would become, shutting up the person who presented himself to him for one period of seven days after another. And when he made his final judgment, he determined by the hair growing out of the spot that had been shown to him — which was, in effect, the fruit that the spot produced.

Before I conclude this section, I want to address a strange notion that some people have recently been led into: the idea that they can certainly know the good spiritual state of another person because their love for that person flows out in an extraordinary way — as though this were a direct revelation from heaven. Their reasoning goes like this: since their love is so strong and tangible, it can be certainly known by those who feel it to be genuine Christian love. If it is genuine Christian love, the Spirit of God must be its author. Since the Spirit of God — who certainly knows whether others are children of God and who is a Spirit of truth — is pleased to cause their love to flow out in this exceptional way toward a particular person as a child of God, it must follow that this infallible Spirit, who never deceives, knows that person to be a child of God. But these people could be convinced of the error in their reasoning if they would simply consider whether it is not their duty — what God actually requires of them — to love as children of God those whom they have every visible reason to regard as children of God.

Even if God, who searches hearts, knows those persons not to be His children, loving them as such is still a duty for those who genuinely believe they are. If it is a duty, then it is good, and failing to do it is sin. Surely, therefore, the Spirit of God may be the author of it. The Spirit of God, without being a Spirit of falsehood, may in such a case help a person do their duty and keep them from sin. But they argue further from the exceptional degree and special quality of the way their love flows out, which they believe the Spirit of God would never produce unless He knew the object was a child of God. But then I ask them: is it not their duty to love all those they are bound to regard as children of God — from everything

they can see in them — to a very great degree, even if God, who sees things they cannot see, knows them not to be so? It is people's duty to love all those they are bound in good conscience to regard as children of God with a far deeper affection than they usually do. Just as we ought to love Christ to the utmost capacity of our nature, so we are duty-bound to love those we believe to be as near and dear to Him as His own members — with an exceeding deep affection, as Christ has loved us. Therefore it is sin not to love them so. We ought to pray to God to keep us from sin by His Spirit and to enable us to do our duty. May not His Spirit answer those prayers and enable us to do our duty in a particular instance, without lying? If He cannot, then God's Spirit is prevented from helping His people do their duty in certain situations because He cannot do so without being a Spirit of falsehood. But surely God is sovereign enough to enable us to do our duty when He pleases and on whatever occasion He pleases. When people believe others to be God's children, God may have other purposes in causing their warm love to flow toward them besides confirming whether their assessment is correct. He may have the merciful purpose of enabling them to do their duty and keeping them from the dreadful evil of sin. And will they say God should be forbidden to show them that mercy in such a case? Suppose I am away from home and hear that during my absence my house has burned down, but that my family escaped the flames in some remarkable way — and everything about how the story reaches me makes it highly credible. It would be sin for me in that situation not to feel very great gratitude to God, even if the story turned out to be untrue. And is God not sovereign enough to show me that mercy in that situation

— to enable me to do my duty to a much greater degree than I usually do — without being chargeable with deception for strengthening a false belief?

It is very clear that an error or mistaken belief may be the occasion of a gracious exercise, and consequently of a gracious influence of the Spirit of God, as Romans 14:6 shows: 'He who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.' The apostle here is speaking about those who, because of mistaken and unnecessary scruples, avoided eating what they considered ceremonially unclean food. This makes it very evident that there can be genuine exercises of grace — a genuine regard for the Lord, and specifically genuine thankfulness — that are brought about through both an erroneous belief and an erroneous practice. Consequently, an error may be the occasion of truly holy exercises that are from the infallible Spirit of God. And if this is the case, it is certainly too much for us to determine to what degree the Spirit of God may produce such holy exercises even in connection with a mistaken belief.

This notion of being able to certainly know another person's spiritual state through love flowing out is not only without basis in reason or Scripture — it is contrary to Scripture. Scripture says nothing at all about judging another's spiritual state in this way, but directs us to judge chiefly by the fruits observable in them. It is also contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture, which plainly teaches that the spiritual state of another's soul toward God cannot be known by us (Revelation 2:17): 'To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows

but he who receives it.' And Romans 2:29: 'He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.' That this final phrase — 'his praise is not from men, but from God' — refers to the inability of human beings to judge whether someone is inwardly a Jew (just as they could easily see from outward marks whether someone was outwardly a Jew), and means that it belongs to God alone to give a decisive verdict in this matter, is confirmed by the same apostle's use of this phrase in 1 Corinthians 4:5: 'Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.' In the two verses before this, the apostle says: 'But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.' This is further confirmed because the apostle in Romans 2 is addressing specifically those who had a high opinion of their own holiness, boasted in God, were confident in their own discernment, and were certain they knew God's will and could distinguish what was excellent (as the marginal reading has it, 'tested the things that differ') — those who were convinced they were guides of the blind and a light to those in darkness, instructors of the foolish and teachers of children, and who therefore took it upon themselves to judge others (Romans 2:1, 17-20).

And how arrogant is the notion of those who imagine they can certainly know another person's godliness, when even the great apostle Peter was content to say of Silvanus only that he was 'a

faithful brother, as I consider him' (1 Peter 5:12). And yet this Silvanus appears to have been a very prominent minister of Christ, an evangelist, a well-known and shining light in God's church in those days, and an intimate companion of the apostles (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

PART 2.

If anyone, on reading what has just been said, is ready to excuse himself and say, 'I am not one of those who have no religious affections — I am often greatly moved by the great things of religion,' let him not rest content merely with the fact that he has religious affections. For as was observed before, just as we ought not to reject and condemn all affections as though true religion did not consist in them at all, so on the other hand we ought not to approve of all, as though every person who was religiously moved therefore possessed true grace and was experiencing the saving work of God's Spirit. The right approach is to distinguish among religious affections, between one kind and another. So let us now endeavor to do that. To accomplish it, I would do two things.

First, I would note some things that are no signs one way or the other — neither proving that affections are the kind that true religion consists in, nor proving that they are not — so that we may be guarded against judging affections by false signs.

Second, I would observe some things in which affections that are spiritual and gracious differ from those that are not, and by which the genuine ones may be distinguished and recognized.

First, I would note some things that are no signs that affections are gracious, or that they are not.

First sign that proves nothing: religious affections are very intense or raised very high.

Some people are quick to condemn all high affections. If a person appears to have his religious affections raised to an extraordinary level, they are prejudiced against him and conclude that his experience is a delusion, without further inquiry. But if true religion lies very much in religious affections, as has been proved, then it follows that if there is a great deal of true religion, there will be great religious affections. If true religion in a person's heart is raised to a great height, divine and holy affections will also be raised to a great height.

Love is an affection — but will any Christian say that people ought not to love God and Jesus Christ in a high degree? And will any say that we ought not to have a very great hatred of sin and a very deep sorrow for it? Or that we ought not to exercise a high degree of gratitude to God for the mercies we receive from Him, and for the great things He has done for the salvation of fallen humanity? Or that we should not have very great and strong desires after God and holiness? Is there anyone who will claim that his affections in religion are already great enough — that he has no cause to be humbled that he is not more affected by the things of religion than he is, no reason to be ashamed that he has no greater love for God, sorrow for sin, and gratitude for the mercies he has received? Who is there who will give thanks to God that he is already affected enough by what he has read and heard of God's wonderful love — to sinners and rebels — in giving His only begotten Son to die for them, and of the dying love of Christ, and will pray that he may not

be affected with these things to any higher degree, on the grounds that high affections are improper and unbecoming in Christians, being the mark of enthusiasm and ruinous to true religion?

Our text plainly speaks of great and high affections when it speaks of 'rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory' — the most superlative expressions language can provide. And Scripture frequently calls us to exercise very high affections. The first and greatest commandment of the law piles up expressions, as though ordinary language were insufficient to express the degree to which we should love God: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' So the saints are called to exercise high degrees of joy: 'Rejoice,' says Christ to His disciples, 'and be exceedingly glad' (Matthew 5:12). And Psalm 68:3: 'Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice with gladness.' Similarly, throughout the Psalms the saints are repeatedly called to shout for joy, and in Luke 6:23, to leap for joy. They are also abundantly called to exercise high degrees of gratitude for mercies — to praise God with all their hearts, with hearts lifted up in the ways of the Lord, their souls magnifying the Lord, singing His praises, speaking of His wonderful works, declaring His deeds, and so on.

We find the most outstanding believers in Scripture often expressing high affections. The psalmist speaks of his love as though it were inexpressible (Psalm 119:97): 'Oh, how I love Your law!' He expresses a great degree of hatred of sin (Psalm 139:21-22): 'Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred.' He also expresses a high degree of sorrow for sin — speaking of his sin going over his head like a heavy burden too heavy for him, of his

groaning all day long, of his vitality drained away like the heat of summer, and of his bones as though broken with sorrow. He often expresses great degrees of spiritual desire in some of the strongest language imaginable — his longing, his soul thirsting as in a dry and parched land where there is no water, his panting, his flesh and heart crying out, his soul breaking for the longing it has, and so on. He expresses the exercise of great and extreme grief for the sins of others. Psalm 119:136: 'My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not keep Your law.' And verse 53: 'Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.' He expresses high exercises of joy. Psalm 21:1: 'The king shall joy in Your strength, O Lord, and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice.' Psalm 71:23: 'My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You.' Psalm 63:3-6: 'Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches; for You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.'

The apostle Paul expresses high exercises of affection. He expresses the exercise of pity and concern for others' good, even to anguish of heart; a great, fervent, and abundant love; earnest and longing desires; and overflowing joy. He speaks of the conflicts and triumphs of his soul, his earnest expectation and hope, his abundant tears, and the travail of his soul in pity, grief, earnest desires, godly jealousy, and fervent zeal — in many of the places already cited, which I need not repeat. John the Baptist expressed great joy (John 3:29). The blessed women who had anointed

Jesus's body are described as being in a very high exercise of religious affection when Christ rose from the dead (Matthew 28:8): 'And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy.'

It is repeatedly foretold about the church of God in her future seasons of blessing on earth that she will rejoice exceedingly (Psalm 89:15-16): 'They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your face; in Your name they shall rejoice all the day, and by Your righteousness they shall be exalted.' And: 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, your King is coming to you.' The same is depicted in countless other passages. And because high degrees of joy are the proper and natural fruit of the gospel of Christ, the angel who proclaimed that gospel called it 'good news of great joy which will be for all the people.'

The saints and angels in heaven, where religion exists in its highest perfection, are powerfully affected by what they behold and contemplate of God's perfections and works. They are all like a pure, heavenly flame of fire in their love, and in the greatness and strength of their joy and gratitude. Their praises are described as 'the sound of many waters' and 'the sound of loud thunder.' The only reason their affections are so much greater than the holy affections of believers on earth is that they see the things they are affected by more according to their true nature, and their affections are more closely conformed to the nature of things. Therefore, if religious affections in people here below are of the same nature and kind as the angels' affections, the higher they are and the closer they approach that heavenly degree, the better — because they will then be so much more conformed to the truth, as the angels' affections are.

From all of this it is certainly clear that religious affections being at a very high degree is no evidence that they are not of the nature of true religion. Those who condemn people as fanatics merely because their affections are very high are therefore greatly mistaken.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that religious affections are spiritual and gracious simply because they are great. Scripture — our sure and infallible guide in judging such matters — makes it very clear that there are religious affections which are very high and yet are not spiritual or saving. The apostle Paul speaks of affections in the Galatians that had been exceedingly elevated, and yet he clearly speaks of them with fear that they had been empty and had come to nothing (Galatians 4:15): 'Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I testify about you that, if possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.' And in verse 11 he tells them 'I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.' The children of Israel were greatly affected by God's mercy to them when they saw His wonderful works at the Red Sea and sang His praise — though they soon forgot His works. They were greatly affected again at Mount Sinai when they saw the marvelous manifestations God made of Himself there, and seemed powerfully engaged in mind, eagerly answering when God proposed His holy covenant to them, saying, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' But how quickly did all that powerful eagerness and engaged affection come to an end? How quickly were they turned aside after other gods, rejoicing and shouting around their golden calf? So great multitudes who were affected with the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead were elevated to a high degree and made a great commotion when Jesus

shortly after entered Jerusalem — greatly magnifying Christ, as though the ground were not good enough for the donkey He rode on to tread upon. They cut down palm branches and spread them in the road; they even pulled off their garments and spread them in the way. They cried with loud voices, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest' — making the whole city ring and throwing everyone into a stir. We learn from the evangelist John that the reason the people made this commotion was because they were affected by the miracle of raising Lazarus (John 12:18). Such a vast multitude cried 'Hosanna' on this occasion that it led the Pharisees to say, 'Look, the world has gone after Him' (John 12:19) — yet Christ had at that time very few true disciples. And how quickly did all that commotion end? All of it was silenced and dead when this same Jesus stood bound, with a mock robe and a crown of thorns, to be mocked, spit upon, flogged, condemned, and executed. There was indeed a great and loud outcry about Him among the multitude then, just as before — but of a very different kind. It was not then 'Hosanna, Hosanna,' but 'Crucify, crucify.'

And all orthodox theologians agree that religious affections may be raised to a very high degree and yet contain nothing of true religion.

Second sign that proves nothing: religious affections have great effects on the body.

All affections whatsoever have, to some degree, an effect on the body. As was observed before, such is our nature, and such are the laws governing the union of soul and body, that the mind cannot have any lively or vigorous exercise without some effect upon the body. The body is so responsive to the mind, and the bodily fluids

— especially the vital spirits — so closely attend the mind's movements and exercises, that there cannot even be an intense thought without some effect upon them. Indeed, it is questionable whether a soul in a body ever has a single thought or any exercise at all without some corresponding movement or change of movement, to some degree, in the fluids of some part of the body. But universal experience shows that the exercise of the affections has a particular tendency to produce some perceptible effect on the body. If this is so — that all affections have some bodily effect — then we may reasonably expect that the greater those affections are, and the more vigorous their exercise (other circumstances being equal), the greater the effect on the body will be. It is therefore not surprising that very great and strong exercises of the affections should have great effects on the body. And since there are very great affections of both the common and the spiritual kind, it is not surprising that great bodily effects should arise from both kinds of affections. Consequently, these bodily effects are no sign of which kind of affection produced them.

Great effects on the body are certainly no reliable evidence that affections are spiritual — for we see that such effects often arise from strong affections about ordinary, worldly things, when religion is not involved at all. If purely natural affections about earthly things can produce these effects, I know of no basis on which to conclude that high affections about religious things — arising in the same way from nature — cannot have similar effects.

Nor, on the other hand, do I know of any rule by which anyone could determine that gracious and holy affections — when raised as high as any natural affections and exercised with equal strength and vigor — cannot have a great effect on the body. No such rule

can be derived from reason. I know of no reason why being affected by a vision of God's glory should not cause the body to faint, just as well as being affected by a sight of Solomon's glory. No such rule has ever been drawn from Scripture. None has been found in all the recent controversies about things of this nature. There is a great power in spiritual affections. We read of the power that works in Christians, of the Spirit of God being in them as a Spirit of power, and of the effective working of His power in them — yes, of the working of God's mighty power in them. Yet human nature is weak. Flesh and blood are described in Scripture as exceedingly weak — especially in its unfitness for great spiritual and heavenly exercises (Matthew 26:41; 1 Corinthians 15:43, 50). The text we are studying speaks of 'joy inexpressible and full of glory.' Given what human nature is like and what the affections are like, who can reasonably doubt that such inexpressible and glorious joys could be too great and powerful for weak, frail humanity — so as to be considerably overpowering to it? Scripture makes it clear that true divine revelations of God's glory, when given in great measure, have a tendency — by their effect on the mind — to overpower the body. Scripture teaches us repeatedly that if these visions were given to the degree they are given in heaven, the weak frame of the body could not survive it, and that no one can see God in that way and live. The knowledge the saints have of God's beauty and glory in this world, and the holy affections that arise from it, are of the same nature and kind as what the saints experience in heaven — differing only in degree and circumstances. What God gives them here is a foretaste of heavenly happiness and a pledge of their future inheritance. Who shall limit God in giving this pledge, or say He shall give only so much of the inheritance — only such a por-

tion of the future reward as a pledge of the whole — and no more? And since God has taught us in His Word that the full reward is such that it would instantly destroy the body, is it not too bold for us to set boundaries on the sovereign God — to say that in giving the pledge of this reward in this world, He will never give so much of it as to even slightly diminish the strength of the body — when God has nowhere limited Himself in this way?

The psalmist, speaking of the intense religious affections he experienced, speaks of an effect in his flesh or body in addition to what was in his soul — expressly distinguishing the two, more than once (Psalm 84:2): 'My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.' Here is a clear distinction between the heart and the flesh, as both being affected. So also Psalm 63:1: 'My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.' Here again there is an evident and deliberate distinction between the soul and the flesh.

The prophet Habakkuk speaks of his body being overpowered by a sense of God's majesty (Habakkuk 3:16): 'I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble.' So the psalmist also speaks expressly of his flesh trembling (Psalm 119:120): 'My flesh trembles for fear of You.'

That such revelations of God's glory given in this world sometimes have a tendency to overpower the body is evident from Scripture, which records that this has actually happened when God made certain external manifestations of Himself to some of the saints — manifestations designed to give them a sense of His majesty and glory. We have such instances in the prophet Daniel

and the apostle John. Daniel, describing an external representation of the glory of Christ, says (Daniel 10:8): 'So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.' And the apostle John, describing a similar manifestation made to him, says (Revelation 1:17): 'When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.' It is of no use to say that these were only outward signs or symbols of Christ's glory which these believers beheld. For while it is true that they were outward representations of Christ's glory seen with their eyes, the purpose of these outward symbols was to give these prophets a true apprehension of what was represented — namely, the true divine glory and majesty of Christ, which is His spiritual glory. These outward signs were used only as significations of that spiritual glory, and that is undoubtedly how the prophets received, understood, and were affected by them. In accordance with God's purpose in giving these outward signs, they received through them a great and vivid apprehension of the real glory and majesty of God's nature — and were so powerfully affected that their souls were overcome and their bodies overpowered. And I think those are very bold and reckless who would say that God cannot — or will not — give similarly clear and affecting apprehensions of that same real glory and majesty of His nature to any of His saints, without the use of such external signs.

Before I leave this point, I would further note that Scripture plainly and repeatedly uses bodily effects to express the intensity of holy and spiritual affections — such as trembling, groaning, being faint, crying out, panting, and fainting. Now if these are taken as merely figurative expressions representing the degree of affection, I trust everyone will grant that they are fitting and appropri-

ate figures to represent the high degree of those spiritual affections that the Spirit of God uses them to express. But I do not see how they could be fitting figures if those spiritual affections — however high — had no tendency to produce any such effects, and if, on the contrary, these effects were actually the proper results and telltale signs of false affections and the deceptions of the devil. I cannot believe that God would routinely use things that are completely foreign to spiritual affections, and that are clear marks of the devil's handiwork and smelling strongly of the pit, as beautiful figures to represent the high degree of holy and heavenly affections.

Third sign that proves nothing: affections cause people to be fluent, fervent, and abundant in talking about the things of religion.

Many people, when they see this in others, are strongly prejudiced against them. The fact that a person is so full of religious talk is, to them, sufficient grounds to condemn him as a Pharisee or a pretentious hypocrite. On the other hand, many others, when they see this effect in someone, immediately and imprudently conclude that the person is a true child of God and under the saving influence of God's Spirit, and speak of it as strong evidence of a new creation. They say things like, 'His mouth is now open — he used to be slow to speak, but now he is full and free. He speaks openly about his heart and shares his experiences and declares the praises of God; it comes from him as freely as water from a fountain,' and the like. And they are especially convinced — in an entirely confident and unquestioning way — that a person has been savingly worked upon if he is not only free and abundant but also very affectionate and earnest in his talk.

But this reflects little judgment and narrow, short experience, as events abundantly show. It is a mistake people commonly fall into by trusting their own wisdom and discernment and making their own ideas their rule, instead of the holy Scripture. Although Scripture is full of rules both for how we should judge our own condition and how we should form opinions about others, there is nowhere in Scripture any rule by which to judge ourselves or others to be in a good spiritual state on the basis of this effect. For this is merely the religion of the mouth and tongue — what Scripture represents by the leaves of a tree. Though a tree should not be without them, leaves are never given in Scripture as evidence that the tree is good.

A person may be inclined to talk abundantly about religious things from a good cause or from a bad one. It may be because his heart is very full of holy affections — for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. And it may be because his heart is very full of religious affection that is not holy — for still, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. It is very much the nature of affections — of whatever kind they are, and whatever objects they are exercised about — if they are strong, to move people to speak much about what they are affected with, and not only to speak much but to speak very earnestly and fervently. Therefore, a person's talking abundantly and very fervently about the things of religion can be evidence of no more than this: that he is very much affected with the things of religion. But this may be — as has already been shown — with no grace at all. What people are strongly affected with, while that strong affection lasts, they will be earnestly engaged about and will be likely to show that earnestness in their talk and behavior. This is how the greater part of the Jews

in all Judea and Galilee responded for a time to John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, when they were willing for a season to rejoice in his light — a great commotion was made throughout the entire land, and among all sorts of people, about this great prophet and his ministry. In the same way, the multitudes often showed great earnestness and intense engagement in every outward expression concerning Christ and His preaching and miracles — being astonished at His teaching, joyfully receiving the Word, following Him sometimes night and day, forsaking food, drink, and sleep to hear Him; once following Him into the wilderness, fasting for three days on the way, to hear Him; sometimes praising Him to the skies, saying, 'Never did a man speak the way this man speaks!' — fervent and earnest in what they said. But what did all of this come to, in the case of most of them?

A person may be excessively full of talk about his own religious experiences — constantly bringing it up everywhere and in all company — and when this is the case, it is more of a dark sign than a good one. A tree that is excessively full of leaves seldom bears much fruit. And a cloud, though it appears very heavy and full of water, if it brings too much wind with it, seldom provides much rain to the dry and thirsty earth. This very thing the Holy Spirit is pleased to use several times as a picture of a great show of religion with the mouth without corresponding fruit in the life (Proverbs 25:14): 'Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.' And the apostle Jude, speaking of some in the early church who had crept in unnoticed among the saints and — making a great show of religion — had for a time gone unsuspected, says (Jude 4, 12): 'These are hidden reefs... clouds without

water, carried along by winds.' And the apostle Peter, speaking of the same kind of people, says (2 Peter 2:17): 'These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm.'

False affections, if equally strong, are far more inclined to display themselves than true ones. This is because it is the nature of false religion to seek to be seen and noticed — as it was with the Pharisees.

Fourth sign that proves nothing: people did not produce the affections themselves or work them up by their own effort and planning.

Many people today condemn all affections that arise in a way their subjects cannot account for — that do not seem to be the result of their own efforts or the natural consequence of human faculties and principles in such circumstances and under such means — but rather seem to come from the influence of some outside, supernatural power on their minds. How greatly has the doctrine of the inward experience — or the perceptible sensing — of the immediate power and working of the Spirit of God been mocked and ridiculed by many in recent times. They say that the Spirit of God's way is to work silently, secretly, and imperceptibly alongside the use of means and our own efforts, so that there is no distinguishing by sense between the influences of the Spirit of God and the natural operations of our own minds' faculties.

It is true that expecting to receive the saving influences of the Spirit of God while neglecting the diligent use of the appointed means of grace is unreasonable presumption. And to expect the Spirit of God to work savingly on one's mind without the Spirit's using means as instruments to accomplish the effect is a form of

enthusiasm. It is also undoubtedly true that the Spirit of God works in very varied ways and circumstances, and that sometimes He works in a more secret and gradual manner, beginning from smaller beginnings, than at other times.

But if there is indeed a power entirely different from and beyond human power, or the power of any means or instruments, and above the power of nature — which is required for the production of saving grace in the heart, as is generally professed — then it is in no way unreasonable to suppose that this effect would very often be produced in a manner that makes it very evident, apparent, and perceptible that it is so. If grace is indeed the result of the powerful and effective operation of an outside agent — a divine power acting from outside ourselves — why is it unreasonable to suppose it should seem to those who receive it to be exactly that? Is it a strange thing that it should appear to be as it is? When grace in the heart is truly not produced by human strength, nor by the natural power of our own faculties, nor by any means or instruments, but is genuinely the work and creation of the Spirit of the Almighty — is it strange and inexplicable that it should seem to those who experience it as consistent with truth rather than contrary to it? If people report effects they are aware of in their own minds that seem to them to come not from the natural power of their own minds but from the supernatural power of another agent, should this immediately be treated as certain evidence of delusion, simply because things appear to them as they actually are? For this is the very objection being made: it is treated as clear evidence that the perceptions and affections many people have are not from the cause they appear to be from — precisely because they appear to be from that cause. People declare that what they

are conscious of seems evidently not to come from themselves but from the mighty power of the Spirit of God, and others condemn them on that basis, concluding that what they experience is not from the Spirit of God but from themselves or from the devil. This is how multitudes are being treated today by their neighbors — and it is entirely unreasonable.

If it is indeed the case — as Scripture abundantly teaches — that grace in the soul is so fully God's work that it is fittingly compared to the effects most remote from any strength in the subject, such as new birth, resurrection from the dead, and creation out of nothing, and that it is an effect in which the mighty power of God is greatly glorified and the surpassing greatness of His power is displayed — then what account can be given for why the Almighty, in so great a work of His power, should take care to conceal His power so thoroughly that the subjects of it can discern nothing of it? Or what reason or revelation does anyone have to conclude that He does so? If we judge by Scripture, this is not consistent with God's manner in His works and dealings — on the contrary, God's pattern in the great works of His power and mercy for His people is to order things so that His hand is visible, His power conspicuous, and people's dependence on Him unmistakable, so that no human being should boast before Him, that God alone might be exalted, that the surpassing power might be of God and not of man, that Christ's power might be made evident in human weakness, and that no one might say, 'My own hand has saved me.' So it was in most of the great temporal deliverances God worked for Israel of old, which were pictures of the salvation of God's people from their spiritual enemies. So it was in the redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage — He redeemed them with a strong hand

and an outstretched arm, and to make His power all the more conspicuous, He first allowed Israel to be brought into the most helpless and desperate circumstances. So it was in the great deliverance through Gideon — God required the army to be reduced to a handful, armed with nothing but trumpets, torches, and clay jars. So it was in the deliverance of Israel from Goliath — by a young man with a sling and a stone. So it was in the great work of calling the Gentiles and converting the pagan world after Christ's ascension — after the world's wisdom had failed to know God, and all the efforts of philosophers had proved useless for many generations to reform the world, and it had become abundantly clear that the world was utterly helpless apart from the mighty power of God. And so it was in most of the conversions of individual people recorded in the New Testament — they were not worked on in that silent, secret, gradual, and imperceptible manner now insisted upon, but with clear signs of a supernatural power, remarkably and suddenly causing a great change, which in these days is regarded as certain proof of delusion and fanaticism.

The apostle in Ephesians 1:18-19 speaks of God's enlightening the minds of Christians and bringing them to believe in Christ, to the end that 'they might know' the surpassing greatness of His power toward those who believe. The words are: 'the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.' When the apostle speaks of believers being subjects of God's power — in their enlightening and effectual calling — to the end that they might know what His

mighty power is toward those who believe, he can only mean that they might know it by experience. But if the saints know this power by experience, then they feel it, perceive it, and are conscious of it — as something sensibly distinct from the natural operations of their own minds. This is incompatible with the notion that God operates so secretly and imperceptibly that those who are subjects of it cannot perceive themselves to be under any outside power at all — except perhaps by reasoning it out from Scripture statements, which is a very different thing from knowing it by experience.

It is therefore very unreasonable and unscriptural to conclude that affections are not from the gracious work of God's Spirit simply because those who have them are perceptibly aware that the affections did not arise from themselves.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that affections are gracious simply because a person did not deliberately produce them — because they arose in a way the person cannot explain.

Some people use this as an argument in their own favor when describing what they have experienced. They say things like: 'I am sure I did not make it myself. It was not the result of any planning or effort on my part. It came when I was thinking of nothing like it. Even if I wanted to, I could not make it happen again on demand.' From this they conclude that what they experienced must be from the mighty influence of God's Spirit and must be saving in nature. But this conclusion is ignorant and without foundation. What they experienced may indeed not have come from themselves directly — it may have come from some invisible agent, some spirit other than their own. But it does not follow that it was from the Spirit of God. There are spirits besides the Holy Spirit who influence human minds. We are told not to believe every spirit, but to test the

spirits to see whether they are from God. There are many false spirits, extremely active among people, who often disguise themselves as angels of light and in many remarkable ways — with great subtlety and power — imitate the operations of the Spirit of God. Many of Satan's operations are very clearly distinguishable from the voluntary workings of a person's own mind. This is true in the dreadful, horrifying suggestions and blasphemous thoughts he injects into many people, and in the groundless fears and terrors he authors. Satan's power can be just as immediate and evident in producing false comforts and joys as in producing terrors and horrible suggestions — and often is. It is not within human power to put oneself into the kind of raptures that the Anabaptists in Germany and many other raving enthusiasts like them experienced.

Beyond this, it must also be considered that a person may receive impressions on their mind that they did not produce themselves and that did not come from an evil spirit — they may come from the Spirit of God — and yet be only common, non-saving operations of the Spirit rather than saving ones. The subjects of such impressions may be among those described in Hebrews 6:4-5 — those who were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come — and yet may be entirely without the things that accompany salvation, mentioned in verse 9.

And in cases where neither a good nor an evil spirit has any direct involvement, persons — especially those with a weak or highly impressionable constitution, with a brain that is easily susceptible to impressions — may have strange perceptions, vivid imaginations, and strong accompanying affections that arise in unex-

plained ways without being voluntarily produced. We observe that such people are prone to these kinds of impressions about ordinary, earthly things, and there is equal reason to expect it can happen regarding spiritual things. Just as a sleeping person has dreams they did not deliberately produce, so many such persons, in a similar way, may experience involuntary impressions even while awake.

Fifth sign that proves nothing: religious affections come with scripture texts that are brought powerfully to mind.

It is no evidence against affections being gracious that they were occasioned by scriptures coming to mind — provided it is the scripture itself, or the truth the scripture contains and teaches, that is the basis of the affection, and not merely the sudden or unusual way in which the text arrived.

On the other hand, it is also no evidence that affections are gracious simply because they arose when a scripture text came suddenly and powerfully to mind — whether those affections are fear, hope, joy, sorrow, or anything else. Some people treat this as strong evidence that their affections are saving — especially when the affections produced are pleasant ones like hope or joy. They will mention it as proof that everything is right: 'My experience came with the Word,' they say, and they will add, 'Such and such wonderful promises were brought to my mind: They came suddenly, as though they were being spoken directly to me. I had no part in bringing that text to mind. I was not thinking of anything that would lead to it. It came all at once and caught me off guard.' 'I had not thought of it for a long time beforehand. At first I did not even know it was scripture. I could not remember ever having read it.' And they may add: 'One scripture came flowing in after another

— texts from all over the Bible, the sweetest and most fitting texts imaginable, one after another — until I was as full as I could be. I could not help but stand in wonder. Tears flowed. I was full of joy and could no longer doubt.' And from all this they conclude they have undeniable evidence that their affections must be from God, must be of the right kind, and that their spiritual state must be good. But they have no grounds for this conclusion at all. Where did they find the rule that says: if affections or experiences arise alongside comforting scripture promises that came to mind unbidden — or if a series of sweet texts flows through the mind one after another — this is certain evidence that the experiences are saving? Where in the Bible — the only sure guide in matters of this kind — is any such rule found?

What deceives many less careful and thoughtful people in this matter seems to be this: Scripture is the Word of God, and there is nothing wrong in it — it is pure and perfect. Therefore, they reason, experiences that come from scripture must be right. But what must be considered is this: affections may arise on the occasion of scripture coming to mind without actually flowing from scripture as its genuine fruit through a right use of it. They may instead arise from an abuse of it. All that can legitimately be argued from the purity and perfection of God's Word regarding religious experience is this: experiences that are consistent with God's Word are right and cannot be otherwise. It does not follow that affections must be right simply because they arose on the occasion of a scripture text coming to mind.

What evidence is there that Satan cannot bring scripture texts to a person's mind and misapply them for deception? This does not seem to exceed Satan's power at all. There is no reason to think

that bringing words or sounds to a person's mind requires omnipotence. If Satan has the power to bring any words or sounds to the mind at all, he may have the power to bring words that happen to be in the Bible. No greater power is required to produce the sounds of a scripture text in the mind than to produce the sounds of an idle story or song. So the same power in Satan that can revive one kind of words in the mind is sufficient to revive the other. The fact that those words carry a different meaning — which depends entirely on convention — does not change his ability to produce or revive the sounds. Or will anyone suppose that scripture texts are so sacred that Satan would not dare to misuse them? That too is a mistake. The one who was bold enough to seize Christ Himself — carrying Him into the wilderness, to a high mountain, and to the pinnacle of the temple — is not afraid to touch the Scripture and abuse it for his own ends. He demonstrated this very boldness at the same time: during the temptation of Christ, he quoted scripture after scripture to deceive and tempt Him. If Satan dared, and was permitted, to bring scripture texts to the mind of Christ Himself in order to tempt Him, what reason do we have to conclude that he will not dare, or will not be permitted, to bring scripture texts to the minds of sinful people to tempt and deceive them? And if he can misuse one scripture text, he can misuse any other. The fact that it is an excellent passage — a comforting and precious promise — does not limit his courage or ability. If he can bring one comforting text to mind, he can bring a thousand. He can select exactly those scriptures best suited to serve his purposes, and he can heap up promise after promise — which, twisted by his false application, will work wonderfully to silence rising doubts and confirm the false joy and assurance of a poor, deceived sinner.

We know that Satan's instruments — corrupt and heretical teachers — do pervert the scripture to the damnation of themselves and others (2 Peter 3:16). They have free use of scripture in every part of it. There is no text so precious and sacred that they are not permitted to abuse it to the eternal ruin of multitudes of souls. And there are no weapons they wield with more destructive effect. There is no reason to conclude that Satan is not permitted to use scripture in the same way his instruments do. For when they do it, they act as his instruments and servants, driven by his instigation and influence. Without question, he does himself what he instigates others to do. Satan's servants simply follow their master and carry out the same work he performs himself.

Just as Satan can abuse scripture to deceive and destroy people, so can a person's own sinfulness and corruption. Sin in the human heart acts like its father. People's own hearts are deceptive like the devil, and use the same means to deceive.

It is therefore clear that a person may have intense affections of hope and joy that arise when scripture texts — even precious promises — come suddenly and powerfully to mind as though spoken directly to them, and that one text may follow another in a remarkable chain, and yet all of this may be no evidence whatsoever that these affections are divine or that they are anything other than the effects of Satan's delusions.

I would further note that a person may have heightened and joyful affections that come along with God's Word — and not only alongside it but genuinely arising from it — and yet those affections may be neither from Satan nor from the corruption of their own heart, but from some influence of the Spirit of God working through the Word, and yet have nothing of true and saving religion

in them. The stony-ground hearers in the parable had great joy from the Word — joy that is depicted as springing up from the Word just as growth springs from a seed. In their outward appearance, their affections closely resembled the growth depicted on the good ground, with no difference visible until it was revealed by what happened in a time of trial. And yet there was no saving religion in those affections.

Sixth sign that proves nothing: religious affections have the appearance of love.

No professing Christian claims that the presence of love is an argument against the genuineness of religious affections. Some, however, believe that the appearance of love is good evidence that affections are from the sanctifying and saving influence of the Holy Spirit. Their reasoning is that Satan cannot love — that this affection is directly contrary to his nature, which is enmity and malice. It is true that nothing is more excellent, heavenly, and divine than a spirit of genuine Christian love toward God and people. It surpasses knowledge, prophecy, miracles, and speaking with the tongues of men and angels. It is the chief of the Spirit's graces, the life, essence, and sum of all true religion — and the quality by which we are most conformed to heaven and most contrary to hell and the devil. But it is poor reasoning to conclude from this that love has no counterfeits. The more excellent a thing is, the more counterfeits there will be of it. There are far more counterfeits of silver and gold than of iron and copper. There are many false diamonds and rubies, but who bothers to counterfeit common stones? The more excellent something is, the harder it is to duplicate its true inner nature and value — yet the more numerous the counterfeits will be, and the more art and cunning will be devoted to copy-

ing its outward appearance. This is why the greatest danger of fraud is in buying the most excellent medicines — even though they are hardest to replicate in true virtue, and even though their counterfeits are worthless when you get them. So it is with Christian virtues and graces. Satan's subtlety and the deceptive power of the human heart are most active in counterfeiting those virtues held in the highest regard. Perhaps no graces have more counterfeits than love and humility — for these are the virtues in which the beauty of a true Christian is most clearly seen.

With respect to love specifically, Scripture makes it plain that a person may have a kind of religious love and yet have no saving grace. Christ speaks of many professing Christians whose love will not last and who will therefore fail to be saved (Matthew 24:12-13): 'Because lawlessness will increase, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.' The final words plainly show that those whose love does not endure to the end, but grows cold, will not be saved.

A person may seem to love God and Christ — even with strong and intense affection — and yet have no grace. This was clearly the case with many graceless Jews: those who praised Christ so highly, following Him day and night without food, drink, or sleep; those who said, 'Lord, I will follow You wherever You go'; and those who cried, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.'

The apostle Paul seems to suggest that there were many in his day who had a counterfeit love to Christ, in Ephesians 6:24: 'Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.' The word translated 'sincerity' in some versions actually

means 'incorruption' in the original language. This shows that Paul was aware that many had a kind of love for Christ that was not pure and spiritual.

Similarly, Christian love toward God's people can be counterfeited. Scripture makes it clear that there may be strong affections of this kind without saving grace — as was the case with the Galatians toward the apostle Paul, when they were ready to tear out their own eyes and give them to him, though Paul expressed his fear that their affections had come to nothing and that he had labored over them in vain (Galatians 4:11, 15).

Seventh sign that proves nothing: a person has many different kinds of religious affections occurring together.

Though false religion tends to be incomplete and distorted — lacking the wholeness and symmetry found in true religion — there can still be a great variety of false affections occurring together that closely resemble gracious affections.

It is clear that counterfeits exist for every kind of gracious affection. There are counterfeits of love to God and love to fellow believers, as just noted. There are counterfeits of godly sorrow for sin — as seen in Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab, and the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 9:27; 1 Samuel 24:16-17; 26:21; 1 Kings 21:27; Numbers 14:39-40). There are counterfeits of the fear of God — as in the Samaritans, who feared the Lord while still serving their own gods at the same time (2 Kings 17:32-33). And those enemies of God described in Psalm 66:3 who, through the greatness of God's power, submit themselves to Him — or, as the Hebrew puts it, lie to Him — offering counterfeit reverence and submission. There are counterfeits of gracious gratitude, as in the Israelites

who sang God's praises at the Red Sea (Psalm 106:12), and in Naaman the Syrian after his miraculous healing from leprosy (2 Kings 5:15), and so on.

There are counterfeits of spiritual joy, as seen in the stony-ground hearers (Matthew 13:20) and especially many of John the Baptist's hearers (John 5:35). There are counterfeits of zeal, as in Jehu (2 Kings 10:16), in Paul before his conversion (Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:6), and in the unbelieving Jews (Acts 22:3; Romans 10:2). Graceless people may also have intense religious desires, like Balaam's desires — expressed when he had an extraordinary vision of the blessed state of God's people as distinct from all others in the world (Numbers 23:9-10). They may also have a strong hope of eternal life, as the Pharisees had.

People in a state of nature are capable of resembling every kind of religious affection — and nothing prevents them from having many of them at the same time. Experience abundantly confirms that this is very often the case. It seems to be a common pattern that when false affections are stirred up to a high degree, many of them appear together. The crowd that accompanied Christ into Jerusalem after the miracle of raising Lazarus appears to have been moved by many religious affections at once, all at a high pitch. They seemed filled with wonder, and showed what appeared to be a high degree of love, and displayed great reverence by laying their garments on the ground for Christ to walk on, and showed great gratitude for the good works He had done — praising Him with loud voices for His salvation — and expressed earnest desires for the coming of God's kingdom, which they expected Jesus was about to establish, showing great hope and elevated expectation of its immediate appearance. They were filled with joy, which ani-

mated their acclamations and made the noise ring throughout the entire city, and showed great zeal and eagerness to accompany Jesus and assist Him without delay — now at the time of the great feast of the Passover — as He set up His kingdom. It is easy to understand from human nature and the nature of the affections why, when one affection is raised very high, it tends to stir up others — especially if the affection first raised is counterfeit love, as it was with the crowd who cried 'Hosanna.' Counterfeit love will naturally draw many other affections along with it. As noted earlier, love is the chief of the affections, the source from which the others flow. Consider a person who has been in great distress and terror for some time, afraid of hell, his heart worn down by anguish and dreadful thoughts, standing on the edge of despair — and then is suddenly delivered, through some delusion of Satan, by being made firmly to believe that God has pardoned him and received him as a beloved object, and has promised him eternal life. Perhaps this comes through some vision or a vivid image that suddenly arises in his mind — a person with a beautiful face, smiling at him, arms open, with blood dripping down — which he takes to be Christ, with no genuine enlightening of the understanding to perceive Christ's spiritual excellence and fullness, and no true grasp of the way of salvation revealed in the gospel. Or perhaps it comes through some voice or words that seem to be spoken to him, such as: 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven,' or 'Do not be afraid; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom' — which he takes to be the immediate voice of God, even though there was no genuine prior acceptance of Christ or closing of the heart with Him. If we suppose such a case, what a rush of passions would crowd into such a person's mind, all at once or in

rapid succession? It can be explained entirely by natural principles that such a person's heart, in those circumstances, would soar to the heights with transports of joy, and would be filled with fervent affection toward the imaginary God or Redeemer he believes has rescued him from the dreadful destruction he so feared and has received him with special tenderness as a favored one. It is natural that he would now be filled with wonder and gratitude, that his mouth would be open and full of talk about his experience, that for a time he would think and speak of almost nothing else, that he would seem to magnify the God who has done so much for him, call on others to rejoice with him, appear with a cheerful face, and speak with a loud voice. And though before his supposed deliverance he was full of complaints against God's justice, now it would come easily for him to submit to God, acknowledge his unworthiness, cry out against himself, appear humble before God, and lie at His feet as quiet as a lamb. He would confess his unworthiness and cry out, 'Why me? Why me?' — much like Saul, who when Samuel told him God had appointed him king answered, 'Am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me like this?' — language very similar to that of David, a true saint (2 Samuel 7:18): 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?' Nor is it surprising that such a person would delight in being around those who affirm and applaud his happy condition, that he would love all who esteem and admire him and his experiences, that he would have intense zeal against all who would minimize such things, that he would be inclined to openly separate from and declare war on all who are not of his party, and would glory in his sufferings, be

quick to condemn and censure all who seem to doubt or question these things, and — while the warmth of his affections lasts — would be extremely eager to work hard, deny himself, and promote the cause of those who favor such things, zealously trying to increase their number — just as the Pharisees crossed sea and land to make a single convert. And I could go on and mention many more things that would naturally arise in such circumstances. Anyone who thinks such responses cannot arise in this way without any supernatural divine power has given very little thought to human nature.

Just as all Christian affections flow from genuine divine love, in the same way other false affections naturally flow from counterfeit love. In both cases, love is the source and the other affections are the streams that flow from it. The various faculties, principles, and affections of human nature are like many channels from a single fountain. If the water in the fountain is pure, pure water flows through all those channels. If the water is poisoned, then poisoned streams flow out through all of them. The channels themselves look the same in either case — the great difference lies in the nature of the water. Or consider a different image: human nature is like a tree with many branches growing from one root. If the sap in the root is good, good sap flows through all the branches, and the fruit produced is wholesome. If the sap in the root is poisonous, the same is true throughout the branches, and the fruit is deadly. The two trees may look exactly alike in shape, but the difference is discovered only when you eat the fruit. This is how it often is — at least in some measure — between true believers and hypocrites. There is sometimes a striking similarity between true and false religious experiences, in their outward appearance and in what the

people who have them say and report. The difference is much like the difference between the dreams of Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and his chief baker. The two dreams seemed very much alike — so much so that when Joseph interpreted the cupbearer's dream as meaning he would be released from prison and restored to the king's favor and his honored position in the palace, the baker was filled with hope and expectation and told his dream as well. But he was terribly disappointed. Though his dream appeared so similar to the favorable, well-promising dream of his companion, the outcome was entirely opposite.

Eighth sign that proves nothing: comforts and joys seem to follow spiritual awakening and conviction of conscience in a particular order.

Many people are prejudiced against affections and experiences that come in a particular sequence that many ministers have emphasized: first, awakening, fear, and solemn apprehensions of judgment; then a humbling sense of total sinfulness and helplessness; and then, light and comfort. They regard all such descriptions of a fixed sequence or set of steps as human inventions. In particular, when high affections of joy follow severe distress and terror, many treat this as an argument against those affections. But these prejudices and objections have no basis in reason or Scripture. Surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that before God delivers a person from a state of sin and exposure to eternal destruction, He would give that person some meaningful sense of the evil from which they are being rescued. This way, deliverance is experienced consciously — the person understands their own salvation and knows something of what God has done for them. Saved people move through two very different states: first, a state of con-

demnation, and then a state of justification and blessing. Since God deals with people according to their rational, intelligent nature, it seems entirely reasonable — and consistent with God's wisdom — that saved people would be in these two states in a way they are conscious of. First, that they would consciously experience being in a state of condemnation, in a condition of real misery and dreadful danger; and then afterward, that they would consciously experience being in a state of deliverance and happiness. First, they should be fully aware of their absolute need; and afterward, of Christ's sufficiency and God's mercy through Him.

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God's way of dealing with people is to lead them into a wilderness before He speaks comfort to them — to arrange things so that they are brought into distress, made to see their own helplessness and absolute dependence on His power and grace, before He acts to deliver them. God's time to relent for His people comes when their strength is gone and they have no one left, when they see that their false gods cannot help them and that the rock they trusted is worthless (Deuteronomy 32:36-37). Before God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, He prepared them by letting them see they were in a desperate situation, and they cried out to God because of their hard bondage (Exodus 2:23; 5:19). Before God worked the great deliverance at the Red Sea, they were brought into extreme distress: the wilderness had shut them in, they could not turn right or left, the Red Sea was before them, and the vast Egyptian army was behind them. They were brought to see they could do nothing to save themselves — that if God did not act, they would be immediately destroyed. Then God appeared and turned their cries into songs. Before they were brought into their rest and enjoyed the abun-

dance of Canaan, God led them through a great and terrible wilderness to humble them, teach them what was in their hearts, and so do them good in the end (Deuteronomy 8:2, 16). The woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years was not healed until she had first spent everything she had on earthly physicians and could not be cured by any of them — left helpless, with nothing more to spend. Then she came to the great Physician, without money or price, and was healed by Him (Luke 8:43-44). Before Christ granted the request of the Canaanite woman, He first appeared to refuse her entirely, humbled her, and brought her to acknowledge that she was no better than a dog. Then He showed her mercy and received her as a dear child (Matthew 15:22, and following). The apostle Paul, before a remarkable deliverance, was pressed beyond measure, beyond strength, to the point of despairing of life itself — but he had the sentence of death in himself so that he would not trust in himself but in God who raises the dead (2 Corinthians 1:8-10). There was first a great storm; the ship was covered with waves and about to sink, and the disciples were brought to cry out, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!' — and then the wind and sea were rebuked and there was a great calm (Matthew 8:24-26). The leper, before being cleansed, had his mouth covered and was required to acknowledge his great misery and total uncleanness by tearing his clothes and crying, 'Unclean! Unclean!' (Leviticus 13:45). And backsliding Israel, before God heals them, is brought to acknowledge that they have sinned and not obeyed the Lord's voice — to see that they lie down in their shame, that confusion covers them, that salvation hoped for from hills and mountains is in vain, and that God alone can save them (Jeremiah 3:23-25). Joseph, who was sold by his brothers and in

this was a picture of Christ, brought his brothers into great anxiety and distress, led them to reflect on their sin and admit, 'We are truly guilty' — and finally to surrender themselves entirely into his hands as servants. Then he revealed himself to them as their brother and their savior.

When we consider the extraordinary manifestations God made of Himself to the saints of old, we find that He consistently appeared first in a terrifying way, and then in ways that brought comfort. So it was with Abraham: first a horror of great darkness fell upon him, and then God revealed Himself to him in sweet promises (Genesis 15:12-13). So it was with Moses at Mount Sinai: God first appeared to him in all the terrors of His dreadful majesty, so that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling' — and then He made all His goodness pass before him and proclaimed His name: 'The Lord God, gracious and merciful,' and so on. So it was with Elijah: first a stormy wind, an earthquake, and consuming fire, and then a still, small, gentle voice (1 Kings 19). So it was with Daniel: he first saw Christ's face like lightning, which terrified him and caused him to faint — and then he was strengthened and refreshed with comforting words: 'O Daniel, you who are greatly loved' (Daniel 10). So it was with the apostle John (Revelation 1). There is a consistent pattern observable in God's dealings and the deliverances He works for His people, and in the manifestations He makes of Himself to them, both in the ordinary and the extraordinary.

But many passages of Scripture more directly show that this is God's ordinary way of working salvation in people's souls — in the way He reveals Himself and His mercy in Christ through the ordinary work of His grace on sinners' hearts. The servant who owed

his king ten thousand talents is first held to his debt: the king pronounces judgment against him and orders him to be sold, along with his wife and children, to make payment. In this way the king humbles him and brings him to acknowledge the full justice of the debt — and then forgives him everything. The prodigal son spends everything, is brought to see himself in desperate circumstances, humbles himself, and acknowledges his unworthiness — before his father runs to him, welcomes him, and celebrates (Luke 15). Old, deep wounds must be probed to the bottom in order to heal. Scripture compares sin to such a wound of the soul, and speaks of healing this wound without probing it as vain and deceptive (Jeremiah 8:11). Christ, in the work of His grace on people's hearts, is compared to rain on mown grass — grass cut down by a scythe (Psalm 72:6) — a picture of His refreshing, comforting influence on the wounded spirit. After our first parents sinned, God first confronted them with the terror of His majesty and justice, and set their sin before them with all its gravity, before relieving them with the promise of the seed of the woman. Christians are described as those who have 'fled for refuge to take hold of the hope set before them' (Hebrews 6:18) — language that implies great fear and a sense of danger coming first. Similarly, Christ is called 'a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a great rock in a parched land' (Isaiah 32:2). And it seems to be the natural meaning of the word 'gospel' — good news — that it is news of deliverance and salvation coming after great fear and distress. There is every reason to believe that God deals with individual believers the way He dealt with His church: He first made her hear His voice in the law, with thunders and lightning, and kept her under that

schoolmaster to prepare her for Christ — and then comforted her with the joyful sound of the gospel from Mount Zion. Likewise, John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Christ and to prepare people's hearts to receive Him — by confronting them with their sins and stripping the self-righteous Jews of their confidence in their own righteousness, telling them they were a generation of vipers and showing them the danger of the wrath to come, saying that the ax was already laid at the root of the trees, and so on.

If it is indeed God's pattern — as the foregoing considerations clearly show it is — to give people a meaningful sense of the greatness and dreadfulness of sin and their wretched condition before He gives them the comfort of deliverance, then surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that people under such convictions will often experience great distress and terrible apprehensions of mind. This is especially so when we consider what these evils actually are: great and many sins committed against the infinite majesty of the great God, and the prospect of enduring the full fury of His wrath for eternity. And it is even less surprising when we have clear examples in Scripture of people who were brought into extreme distress by such convictions before receiving saving comfort — as the crowd in Jerusalem who were 'cut to the heart' and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And the apostle Paul, who trembled and was astonished before he was comforted. And the jailer, who called for a light, rushed in trembling, fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

From all this it is clear that it is very unreasonable for professing Christians to treat the comfortable and joyful affections of others as suspect simply because they followed the kind of solemn

conviction and distress that has been described.

On the other hand, it is also no evidence that comforts and joys are genuine simply because they follow intense terror and terrifying fears of hell. Some people place great weight on this — treating severe terror as evidence of a deep work of the law in the heart, which they believe properly prepares the way for genuine comfort. But they fail to distinguish between terror and genuine conviction of conscience. Though conviction of conscience often produces terror, the two are not the same thing — and terror often arises from other causes. Genuine conviction of conscience, through the influence of God's Spirit, consists in a real sense of the sinfulness of one's heart and life, and of the dreadfulness of sin as committed against a God of terrible majesty, infinite holiness, deep hatred of sin, and strict justice in punishing it. But some people have terrifying visions of hell — a dreadful pit ready to swallow them up, flames about to seize them, devils all around ready to take them — while at the same time showing very little genuine enlightening of conscience that actually convinces them of their sinfulness in heart and life. Satan, if permitted, can terrify people just as powerfully as the Spirit of God can. It is work that comes naturally to him, and he has many ways of doing it in ways that lead to no good. He may terrify people intensely by impressing on their minds vivid images: a frowning face, a drawn sword, black clouds of vengeance, words of awful doom being pronounced, hell gaping open, devils approaching — not to bring people to genuine conviction of things that are true and revealed in God's Word, but to lead them to false and groundless conclusions, such as that their time has passed, that they are reprobate, that God is implacable, that He has decided to cut them off immediately, and the like.

The terrors some people experience are also largely due to their particular temperament and physical constitution. It is obvious that some people are so constituted that their imaginations are more powerfully impressed by whatever affects them than others. The impression on the imagination stirs up the affections, which in turn heighten the imagination further, and so imagination and affection act back and forth on each other until the affection is raised to an enormous height, and the person is completely overwhelmed and loses all self-control.

Some people speak of having a great sight of their own wickedness, when on careful examination they turn out to have little or no genuine conviction of conscience. They talk about having a dreadfully hard heart, how their heart lies like a stone — when in fact they have none of the thoughts in their mind that true hardness of heart actually involves. They speak of a dreadful burden and mass of sin, a heap of dark and loathsome filthiness within them — when, on close examination, they have no real sense of what corruption of nature actually consists in, no thought about any specific way in which their hearts fall short of what they should be, and no awareness of any actual movements of corruption within them. Many also think they have deep conviction of their actual sins when they truly do not. They talk of their sins being set in order before them, surrounding them in a row with a dreadful and frightening appearance — when in reality they have barely any mental picture of the specific sins they have committed in the course of their lives, let alone a sense of their aggravating circumstances.

And if a person's terror truly did come from the awakening and convicting work of the Spirit of God, it does not follow that it must result in genuine saving comfort. The unmortified corruption of the heart can quench the Spirit of God — after He has been striving — by leading people into presumptuous, self-exalting hope and joy, just as it can obstruct grace in other ways. Not every woman in labor actually gives birth to a living child; sometimes the result is something malformed, lacking any of the qualities of human life. Pharaoh's chief baker, after he had lain in the dungeon alongside Joseph, had a dream that raised his hopes, and he too was lifted out of the dungeon like the chief cupbearer — but it was to be executed.

But even if comforts and joys not only follow great terror and awakening, but also appear to be preceded by exactly the kind of conviction and humbling that is often seen in true converts — coming in distinct steps and in the very method commonly observed — this is still no certain sign that the light and comfort that follows is true and saving. Here are the reasons for this.

First, just as Satan can counterfeit all the saving operations and graces of God's Spirit, he can also counterfeit those operations that prepare the way for grace. If Satan can copy the effects of the Spirit that are special, divine, and sanctifying — so closely that the resemblance is nearly perfect in everything observers can see — then he can far more easily imitate those works of the Spirit that are common, and which people are capable of experiencing while still in a state of spiritual death. These common works are not nearly as high above his power as the saving ones are. The works of God's Spirit by which He forms the creature in His own image and makes it a partaker of the divine nature are the highest and most

divine of all God's works — furthest above the powers of nature and beyond the reach of any creature. But if Satan can produce convincing counterfeits of even these, he can certainly produce counterfeits of things that are of an infinitely lower kind. And experience makes it abundantly clear that false humiliations and false submissions do exist, just as false comforts do. Consider how far Saul was brought — wicked man and proud spirit that he was. Though he was a great king, he was led — under conviction of his sin — to fall down, weeping aloud, before David his own subject (whom he had long hated and openly treated as an enemy), and to condemn himself before him, crying out, 'You are more righteous than I. You have treated me well, whereas I have treated you badly' (1 Samuel 24:16-17). At another time he cried, 'I have sinned. I have played the fool. I have erred greatly' (1 Samuel 26:21). And yet Saul seems to have had very little genuine influence of the Spirit of God at that time — for it was after God's Spirit had already departed from him and given him up, and an evil spirit had begun to trouble him. If this proud king, in a surge of feeling, was brought to humble himself so deeply before a subject he hated and continued to treat as an enemy, then surely there can be appearances of great conviction and humiliation before God in people who remain His enemies at heart and may continue so to the end. People who are terrified by fear of hell often appear to have been thoroughly stripped of confidence in their own righteousness — yet they have not truly been stripped of it in every way. They may have given up some ways of trusting in their own righteousness, while clinging to others that are more hidden and subtle. What often passes for humiliation is really just discouragement about certain

things they used to rely on. And what is called submission to God is not genuine, unconditional surrender — it has some secret negotiation embedded in it that is difficult to detect.

Second, if the operations and effects of the Spirit of God in the convictions and comforts of true converts can be imitated, then their order can also be imitated. If Satan can counterfeit the things themselves, he can easily arrange them in a particular sequence. If he can produce A, B, and C, it is just as easy for him to put A first, then B, then C, as to arrange them in any other order. The nature of divine things is harder for Satan to imitate than their sequence. He cannot perfectly duplicate the inner nature of divine operations — though his counterfeits may look very similar from the outside — but he can perfectly replicate their order. When producing counterfeits, no divine power is required to arrange them in a particular sequence. Therefore, no particular order or method of operations and experiences is a certain sign of their being from God. Only what Satan cannot do — what no power short of divine could bring about — can be trusted as certain evidence of grace.

Third, we have no certain rule for determining how far God's own Spirit may go in operations and convictions that are not in themselves spiritual and saving — while the person who experiences them is never actually converted but falls short of salvation in the end. There is no necessary connection in the nature of things between anything a natural person may experience while still in a state of nature and the saving grace of God's Spirit. And if there is no connection in the nature of things, then there can be no known and certain connection at all, unless it has been revealed by God. But God has revealed no certain connection between a state of salvation and anything a natural person can experience before believ-

ing in Christ. God has revealed no guaranteed connection between salvation and any human qualification, except grace itself and its fruits. Therefore we do not find any legal convictions, or comforts following those convictions, in any particular method or order, ever mentioned in Scripture as certain signs of grace or as experiences unique to the saints. We do find gracious operations and effects themselves mentioned as such signs — thousands of times. This should be sufficient for Christians who are willing to let God's Word, rather than their own reasoning and experiences and guesses, be their sure and sufficient guide in matters of this kind.

Fourth, experience strongly confirms that a person appearing to have convictions and comforts following one another in the method and order often seen in true converts is no certain sign of grace. I appeal to all ministers in this land who have had extensive experience dealing with souls during the recent remarkable season of awakening: have there not been many who did not turn out well, who nevertheless gave a fine account of their experiences and appeared to be converted by the book — that is, with convictions and affections following distinctly and precisely in the order and method that has typically been described as the pattern of the Spirit's operations in conversion?

Just as appearing to follow the distinct steps and method commonly seen in true converts is no certain sign of genuine conversion, so the absence of that pattern is no evidence that a person is not converted. It can be demonstrated from Scripture that a sinner cannot genuinely receive Christ as Savior without being convicted of his sin and misery, his own emptiness and helplessness, and his just desert of eternal condemnation. These convictions must therefore be implied in some way in what is wrought in the soul. But

nothing proves that all these things must be worked out in the soul in a series of clearly distinct, separate, observable steps — each one plain and visible — in every genuinely converted person. On the contrary, as Thomas Shepard observed, sometimes the change made in a believer at the first work of grace is like a confused chaos — the person simply cannot make sense of what is happening in them. The manner in which the Spirit proceeds in those who are born of the Spirit is often deeply mysterious and untraceable. We can hear, as it were, the sound of the wind — the effects are visible — but no one can tell where it came from or where it is going. It is often as difficult to trace the Spirit's way in the new birth as in the natural birth (Ecclesiastes 11:5): 'Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.' The implanting of a principle of grace in the soul is compared in Scripture to the conception of Christ in the womb (Galatians 4:19). This is why the church is called Christ's mother (Song of Solomon 3:11), and every individual believer as well (Matthew 12:49-50). The conception of Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit appears to be a designed parallel to the conception of Christ in the soul of a believer by the power of that same Spirit. And we cannot trace the Spirit's way, or know how the life grows, whether in the womb or in the heart that conceives this holy new life. The new creature may use the words of Psalm 139:14-15: 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret.' Concerning the generation of Christ — both in His own person and in the hearts of His people — it may be said as in Isaiah 53:8: 'Who

can declare His generation?' We do not know the works of God who makes all things. It is God's glory to conceal a matter (Proverbs 25:2), and to have His paths in the mighty waters where His footsteps cannot be traced. This is especially true of His works in the Spirit's operations on the hearts of people, which are the highest of all His works. Therefore it is written (Isaiah 40:13): 'Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him?' It is to be feared that some have gone too far in trying to direct the Spirit of the Lord — mapping out His footsteps and limiting Him to certain fixed steps and methods. Experience plainly shows that the Spirit is unsearchable and untraceable in His method of working in some of the best of Christians during their conversion. Nor does the Spirit follow a particular established scheme, in clearly discernible steps, anywhere near as often as people imagine. A preconceived scheme of what must happen — already received and established by common opinion — has a vast and largely unnoticed influence in shaping how people understand and describe the steps and method of their own experience. I know well how this works, having had much opportunity to observe it. Very often at first, people's experiences look like a confused chaos, as Shepard puts it. But then those parts of their experience that most closely resemble the particular steps being insisted upon are selected out and focused on. These are dwelt upon in their thoughts, and these are the parts told and retold in the account they give. These elements grow brighter and clearer in their minds over time, while what does not fit the scheme grows more obscure and is quietly set aside. What they have experienced is unconsciously adjusted until it conforms to the accepted pattern. And it becomes natural for ministers who insist on distinctness and clar-

ity of method to do the same when dealing with those under their care. Yet so much of the Spirit's work has been observable in recent times that those who have dealt extensively with souls — and are not blinded by thick layers of prejudice — must recognize that the Spirit is so remarkably varied in how He operates that in many cases it is simply impossible to trace His way.

What we must principally attend to, in examining our own state or in guiding others, is the nature of the effect God has brought about in the soul. As for the steps the Spirit took to produce that effect, we may leave those to Him. Scripture repeatedly tells us to examine ourselves by the nature of the fruits of the Spirit — never by the Spirit's method of producing them. Many make a serious mistake in their understanding of what a clear work of conversion looks like. They call a work clear when the successive steps and method of experience are clear. But the truly clearest work is not where the order of what was done is most visible — it is where the spiritual and divine nature of the work itself, and the effect produced, is most clearly seen.

Ninth sign that proves nothing: religious affections lead a person to spend much time in religious activities and to be zealously engaged in the outward duties of worship.

It has been entirely unreasonably used, in recent times, as an argument against the religious affections some have experienced — that they spend so much time in reading, praying, singing, hearing sermons, and the like. Scripture plainly shows that true grace tends to cause people to delight greatly in such religious exercises. True grace had this effect on Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:37): 'She never left the temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers.' Grace had this effect on the early Christians in Jerusalem

(Acts 2:46-47): 'Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God.' Grace made Daniel delight in the duty of prayer and led him to observe it faithfully three times a day, as it also did David (Psalm 55:17): 'Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and He will hear my voice.' Grace makes the saints delight in singing praises to God (Psalm 135:3): 'Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.' And Psalm 147:1: 'Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and praise is beautiful.' Grace also causes them to delight in hearing God's Word preached, making the gospel a joyful sound to them (Psalm 89:15), and making beautiful the feet of those who announce the good news (Isaiah 52:7): 'How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news.' It makes them love God's public worship (Psalm 26:8): 'O Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.' And Psalm 27:4: 'One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.' And Psalm 84:1-2, 10: 'How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord... a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside.'

This is the nature of true grace. But on the other hand, a person being inclined to be abundantly and zealously engaged in the outward exercises of religion, spending much time in them, is no certain evidence of grace — because such a disposition is found in many who have no grace. So it was with the Israelites of old, whose

worship was detestable to God: they attended new moons, Sabbaths, and appointed assemblies, spread out their hands, and offered many prayers (Isaiah 1:12-15). So it was with the Pharisees: they made long prayers and fasted twice a week. False religion can cause people to pray loudly and earnestly (Isaiah 58:4): 'You shall not fast as you do today, making your voice heard on high.' Religion that is not spiritual and saving can cause people to delight in religious duties and ordinances (Isaiah 58:2): 'Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, as a nation that has done righteousness and has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions; they delight in the nearness of God.' It can cause delight in hearing the Word of God preached, as with Ezekiel's hearers (Ezekiel 33:31-32): 'They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not practice them.' So it was with Herod, who 'used to enjoy listening to' John the Baptist (Mark 6:20). So it was with others of John's hearers who 'were willing to rejoice for a while in his light' (John 5:35). And so the stony-ground hearers 'received the word with joy' (Matthew 13:20).

Experience shows that people motivated by false religion may be inclined to be extraordinarily active in the outward exercises of religion — even giving themselves over to them and devoting almost their entire time to them. A type of person was once very common in the Roman Catholic Church, known as recluses, who forsook the world and completely abandoned human society, shut-

ting themselves in a small cell with a vow never to leave it or see another human face (except in case of illness), spending all their days in devotional exercises and communion with God. There were also in ancient times great numbers of people known as hermits and anchorites who left the world to spend all their days in remote deserts, giving themselves over to religious contemplation and devotional practice — some with no shelter but the caves and vaults of mountains, and no food but what the earth produced on its own. I once lived for many months next door to a Jewish man — the houses sharing a wall — and had extensive opportunity to observe him daily. He appeared to me to be the most devout person I had ever seen in my life, spending a great part of his time in acts of devotion at his east-facing window which opened next to mine, appearing intensely engaged — not only throughout the day, but sometimes through entire nights.

Tenth sign that proves nothing: religious affections strongly incline people to praise and glorify God with their mouths. This is implied in what was just observed about abundant engagement in the outward exercises of religion, and was hinted at earlier. But because many seem to regard it as a bright mark of gracious affection when a person is greatly disposed to praise and magnify God — when their mouth is full of His praises and they earnestly call on others to extol and glorify Him — this deserves more specific attention.

No Christian will use this disposition as an argument against a person. Nor can it reasonably be treated as evidence in a person's favor — given what has already been observed and shown: that people without grace may have strong affections toward God and Christ, that these strong affections tend to fill their mouths and in-

cline them to speak much and very earnestly about what moves them, and that every kind of gracious affection has its counterfeits. It becomes even more evident that this is no certain sign of grace when we consider the examples Scripture gives of graceless people doing the very same thing. We often encounter this among the crowd that was present when Christ preached and worked miracles (Mark 2:12): 'And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this.'" Similarly in Matthew 9:8 and Luke 5:26. Also Matthew 15:31: 'So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.' When Christ raised the son of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:16 tells us: 'Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!"' We also read of people glorifying Christ and speaking of Him in the highest terms (Luke 4:15): 'He was teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.' And how the crowds praised Him with loud voices crying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord' — this just before He was crucified! After Christ's ascension, when the apostles healed the lame man, we read that 'all the people were glorifying God for what had happened' (Acts 4:21). When the Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch heard from Paul and Barnabas that God would set aside the Jews and bring the Gentiles in their place, they were moved by this kindness of God toward the Gentiles and glorified the word of the Lord. But not all who did so were true believers — only a certain number among them, as the account makes clear (Acts 13:48):

'When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.' Long before this, the Israelites at the Red Sea sang His praises — and then quickly forgot His works. And Scripture even foretells that false professors and actual enemies of true religion will show eagerness to glorify God (Isaiah 66:5): 'Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word: "Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name's sake, have said, "Let the Lord be glorified."'"

It is also no certain sign that a person has been genuinely affected by grace if, in the midst of their hope and comfort, they are greatly moved by God's undeserved kindness to one so unworthy as themselves, and seem to magnify and extol grace. People who still harbor unmortified pride and enmity against God may, when they imagine they have received extraordinary favor from God, cry out about their own unworthiness and magnify God's undeserved goodness — from no deeper sense of their guilt and from no higher principle than Saul had. Saul still harbored unbroken pride and enmity against David, and yet he was brought — though a king — to acknowledge his sin, crying out, 'I have played the fool, I have erred greatly,' and with great feeling and admiration to magnify David's undeserved and remarkable kindness to him (1 Samuel 24:16-19; 26:21). And from no higher principle than that which moved Nebuchadnezzar when he was affected by God's dealings with him — praising, exalting, and honoring the King of heaven, both he and Darius calling on all nations to praise God (Daniel 3:28-30; 4:1-3, 34-35, 37; 6:25-27).

Eleventh sign that proves nothing: affections make the person who has them intensely confident that what they are experiencing is divine and that their spiritual state is good.

Some argue that being assured of one's good spiritual state is itself a sign of delusion — but this runs directly against Protestant doctrine and against Scripture. God revealed His favor to Noah, Abraham, Job, David, and Hezekiah. And Christ's farewell discourse in John 14-16 makes abundant provision for His disciples' assurance — it is one of the main purposes of those chapters.

Paul speaks throughout his epistles in a tone of assurance. In Galatians 2:20 he says, 'The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.' In Philippians 1:21: 'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.' In 2 Timothy 1:12: 'I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.' In 2 Timothy 4:7-8: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.'

The covenant of grace is designed to give assured hope. Its promises are full and repeated, and they are confirmed with an oath (Hebrews 6:17-18): 'In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.'

Assurance is ordinarily attainable. Peter commands believers to pursue it (2 Peter 1:5-8), and Paul commands self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5). Paul himself ran with certainty of purpose,

not beating the air (1 Corinthians 9:26). He says that 'we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God' (1 Corinthians 2:12). And John's first epistle is filled with 'we know' statements — we know that we know Him, we know that we have passed out of death into life, we know that we are of the truth, we know that He abides in us, we know that we are of God (1 John 2:3; 3:14, 19, 24; 5:19).

Given all this, it is unreasonable to condemn those who are assured of their good spiritual state as hypocrites simply because of their assurance.

On the other hand, confidence is no proof of grace. An overbearing, glaring confidence — like that of the Pharisee, who was so sure of himself that he despised others — stands in sharp contrast to the humble posture of the tax collector, who would not even lift his eyes to heaven.

The natural heart is blind, self-flattering, and self-confident. When a person's natural self-flattery is further inflated by Satan's delusions, the resulting false assurance can become like a mountain — immovable and overwhelming. This explains how some people maintain an unshakable confidence that has no foundation in genuine grace.

Once a hypocrite is settled in a false hope, he lacks the things that often cause true saints to question their hope. First, he does not have a cautious spirit, a deep sense of how much depends on having a sure foundation, or a dread of being deceived. True comfort increases alertness and caution in genuine believers, along with a vivid sense of what it means to appear before an infinitely

holy, just, and all-knowing Judge. But false comfort puts an end to all these things and dangerously numbs the mind. Second, the hypocrite does not know his own blindness, does not recognize the deceitfulness of his own heart, and does not have that low opinion of his own understanding that the true saint has. Those deluded by false discoveries and affections are invariably proud of their spiritual insight and understanding. Third, the devil does not attack the hypocrite's hope the way he attacks the hope of a true saint. The devil is a fierce enemy of true Christian hope — not only because it brings real comfort to the one who has it, but because it is holy and heavenly in nature, strengthening and nourishing grace in the heart and powerfully motivating a strict and diligent Christian life. But he is no enemy to the hypocrite's hope, which of all things best serves his purposes in that person. A hypocrite may maintain his hope without opposition as long as he lives — the devil never disturbing it or even trying to disturb it. But there is likely no true Christian whose hope Satan does not attack. Satan even assaulted Christ Himself on this very point — whether He was the Son of God — and the servant is not above his master, nor the disciple above his Lord; it is enough for the most privileged disciple in this world to be treated as his master was. Fourth, the person with a false hope does not see his own corruption the way the true saint does. A true Christian deals ten times more with his heart and its corruptions than a hypocrite does. The sins of his heart and life appear to him in their full darkness; they look dreadful; and it often seems a great mystery that any grace could coexist with such corruption or be found in such a heart. But a false hope hides corruption, covers it entirely, and the hypocrite sees himself as clean and bright.

There are two kinds of hypocrites: those deceived by their outward morality and external religion — many of whom are professed Arminians in the doctrine of justification — and those deceived by false discoveries and elevated experiences, who often speak against works and human righteousness, talk much about free grace, but at the same time make a righteousness of their discoveries and their humiliation, exalting themselves to heaven on that basis. Thomas Shepard, in his exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, distinguishes these two kinds as legal and evangelical hypocrites, and frequently speaks of the latter as the worse of the two. And it is clear that the latter are by far the most confident in their hope and the most difficult to dislodge from it — I have scarcely known a single instance in my life of such a person being truly undeceived. The main grounds of confidence for many of them are the very same kind of impulses and supposed revelations — sometimes with scripture texts attached, sometimes without — that so many have lately had concerning future events. They call these impulses about their spiritual state 'the witness of the Spirit,' entirely misunderstanding what the witness of the Spirit actually is — as I will explain later. Those who have had visions and impulses about other things have generally received revelations about what they most desired. It is no surprise, then, that people who accept such impressions also receive the same kind of visions about their own eternal salvation — revealing to them that their sins are forgiven, that their names are written in the Book of Life, that they stand in high favor with God, and so on — especially when they are earnestly seeking, expecting, and waiting for evidence of their election and salvation by this very method, as if it were the surest and most glorious form of evidence. Nor is it surprising that when they

receive such a supposed revelation of their good spiritual state, it produces the highest degree of confidence in them. Experience abundantly confirms that those led astray by impulses and imagined revelations are extremely confident. They believe the great God has spoken these things directly to them, and since they have His immediate testimony, strong confidence feels like the highest virtue. So they boldly say, 'I know this — I know it for certain — I am as sure as I am that I exist,' and the like, and they dismiss all argument or inquiry on the matter. Above all, it is easy to understand why impressions and impulses about something so pleasing, something that so flatters their self-love and pride — namely, that they are God's dear children, singled out from most people in the world by His special favor — would produce strong confidence, especially when these impulses and revelations are accompanied by intense affections that they take to be the highest exercises of grace. I have known several people who deeply desired something in the natural realm, were driven by a strong passion, pursued it earnestly through great difficulty and many discouragements, and at last received an impression or supposed revelation that they would obtain what they sought. They regarded this as a sure promise from the Most High, which made them absurdly confident in the face of all contrary reason and all events working against them. There is nothing to prevent people seeking salvation from being deceived by similar delusive impressions, and from being made equally confident through them.

The confidence of many of these evangelical hypocrites, as Shepard calls them, is like the confidence of certain madmen who believe they are kings — they will hold their position against all reason and evidence. In one sense, their confidence is far more un-

shakable than genuine assurance. True assurance is sustained only as the soul is kept in a holy frame and grace remains in lively exercise. If the Christian's grace grows cold and he falls into a lifeless state, he loses his assurance. But this kind of hypocrite's confidence is not shaken by sin — some of them maintain their bold hope even while living in the most corrupt frames and wicked ways, which is itself clear evidence of their delusion.

Here I must observe that certain doctrines are often preached to people in ways that need more care and explanation than they typically receive, because as many people understand them, they powerfully reinforce this delusion and false confidence in hypocrites. The doctrines I have in mind are these: Christians live by faith, not by sight; they give glory to God by trusting Him in the dark; they live on Christ and not on experiences; they must not make their good frames the foundation of their faith. These are excellent and important doctrines when rightly understood, but they become corrupting and destructive in the hands of many who misapply them. Scripture speaks of living or walking by faith and not by sight in only these senses: being governed by regard for eternal things — the objects of faith — that are unseen, rather than by regard for temporal things that are seen; believing things revealed that we have never seen with bodily eyes; and trusting in the promise of future things without yet seeing or enjoying what has been promised, or knowing how it could be fulfilled. This is easily confirmed by looking at the scriptures that speak of faith in contrast to sight: 2 Corinthians 4:18 and 5:7, Hebrews 11:1, 8, 13, 17, 27, 29, Romans 8:24, John 20:29. But as many understand this doctrine, it means that Christians ought to believe and trust in Christ firmly even without any spiritual sight or light — even when

they are in a dark, lifeless frame with no spiritual experiences or discoveries. It is true that those in such darkness should come out of it into the light and believe. But telling them to trust confidently while they remain without spiritual light or sight is an unscriptural and unreasonable doctrine. Scripture knows nothing of a faith in Christ — the kind wrought by God — that is not founded on spiritual sight of Christ. The believing in Christ that comes with a title to eternal life involves seeing the Son and believing in Him (John 6:40). True faith in Christ is never exercised any further than people behold the glory of the Lord as in a mirror and have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6). Those into whose minds the light of the glorious gospel of Christ — who is the image of God — does not shine do not believe (2 Corinthians 4:4). Faith that exists without spiritual light is not the faith of the children of light and of the day — it is the presumption of the children of darkness. Therefore, pressing and urging people to believe without any spiritual light or sight powerfully advances the delusions of the prince of darkness. People cannot exercise faith without some spiritual light, and they can exercise faith only in proportion to the spiritual light they have. People will trust God no further than they know Him, and they cannot be in the exercise of faith in Him one step further than they have a living sight of His fullness and faithfulness. Nor can they genuinely trust in God any further than they are in a grace-filled frame. Those in a dead, carnal frame ought to trust in God — because doing so would be the same thing as coming out of their bad frame and turning to God. But to urge people to trust in God confidently and hold up their hope and peace while they remain in an ungracious frame is effectively urging them to trust in God without gracious trust —

and what is that but wicked presumption? It is just as impossible for people to have a strong, lively trust in God when they have no lively exercises of grace and no real Christian experience as it is for them to be in the lively exercise of grace without actually exercising grace.

It is true that God's people should trust in Him when in darkness — even remaining in that darkness — in this sense: they should trust God when the face of His providence is dark, when everything looks as though He has forsaken them and is not hearing their prayers, when many clouds gather and many enemies surround them with a threatening aspect, when all the events of Providence seem to be against them, when all circumstances make God's promises seem impossible to fulfill, and God must be trusted out of sight — meaning when we cannot see how it is possible for Him to keep His word, when everything except God's mere word makes fulfillment look unlikely, so that if they believe, they must hope against hope. This is how the ancient patriarchs, Job, the psalmists, Jeremiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the apostle Paul all gave glory to God by trusting Him in the dark. We have many examples of this glorious, victorious faith in Hebrews 11. But how different this is from trusting in God without spiritual sight while at the same time remaining in a dead and carnal frame!

There is also such a thing as spiritual light being let into the soul in one way while not in another, and so there is such a thing as saints trusting in God and knowing their good spiritual state even when they lack some kinds of experience. For example, they may have clear views of God's sufficiency and faithfulness, and so confidently trust in Him and know they are His children, while at

the same time not having the clear and sweet sense of His love they enjoy at other times — for it was even so with Christ Himself in His last suffering. They may also have views of much of God's sovereignty, holiness, and all-sufficiency that enable them to submit quietly to Him and exercise a sweet and encouraging hope in God's fullness, even when they are uncertain about their own spiritual state. But how entirely different these things are from trusting in God confidently without spiritual light or experience!

Those who insist that people should live by faith even when they have no experience and are in very bad spiritual states hold an unreasonable view of faith. What they mean by faith is simply believing that one is in a good spiritual state. So they count it a dreadful sin to doubt one's spiritual condition, regardless of what state a person is in or what wicked things he does — because doubt is supposedly the great and heinous sin of unbelief. In their view, the best person, and the one who honors God most, is the one who maintains the most confident and unmovable hope in his good spiritual state precisely when he has the least light or experience — that is, when he is in the worst and most wicked frame and way — because this is supposedly a sign of being strong in faith, giving glory to God, and hoping against hope. But what Bible do they draw this notion of faith from — that faith is a man confidently believing he is in a good spiritual state? If that were faith, the Pharisees had it in an eminent degree, and some of them, as Christ teaches, committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. Scripture presents faith as that by which people are brought into a good state — and therefore it cannot be the same thing as believing they are already in a good state. To say that faith consists in a per-

son believing he is in a good state is effectively the same as saying faith consists in believing that he has faith, or in believing that he believes.

People may be greatly to blame for doubting their spiritual state for the reasons just mentioned, and they may be to blame for having so little grace and so little present exercise and experience of it to serve as evidence of their good state. If they had more experience of faith in action and more experience of grace in exercise, they would have clearer evidence that their state is good, and their doubts would be removed. Their doubting may also arise from unbelief in this way: though there are many things that are good evidence of a work of grace in them, they still greatly doubt whether they are truly in a state of favor with God, because it is they — so unworthy, who have done so much to provoke God's anger. In such a case, their doubts arise from unbelief in that they stem from insufficient sense of and reliance on the infinite riches of God's grace and the sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners. They may also doubt from unbelief when they cannot reconcile God's dealings with His favor toward them, or when the promises seem unlikely to be fulfilled given how the circumstances appear and how many great difficulties stand in the way. Such doubt arises from a failure to depend on God's almighty power and His wisdom and knowledge, which are infinitely above their own. Yet even in such cases, a person's unbelief and their doubting of their state are not the same thing, though one arises from the other.

People may be greatly at fault for doubting their state on the grounds just mentioned, and they may be at fault for having so little grace and so little present exercise of it to serve as evidence of their good state. People are certainly to blame for falling into dead,

carnal frames. But when they are in such a frame and have no real experience of grace in exercise — when, on the contrary, their lusts are prevailing and an unchristian spirit rules — they cannot be blamed for doubting their state. It is just as impossible, in the nature of things, for a holy and Christian hope to be kept alive in its clearness and strength under such circumstances as it is to keep the light in a room when the candle has been put out, or to maintain bright sunshine when the sun has gone down. Past experiences, when darkened by present prevailing lust and corruption, will never sustain a gracious confidence and assurance — that assurance will sicken and decay just as surely as a small child would suffer from repeated blows to the head. It is not at all to be mourned when people in such circumstances doubt their state — on the contrary, it is desirable and best in every way that they should. This is in keeping with that wise and gracious design God has established in His dealings with His people. God has arranged things so that when love decays and its exercise fails or grows weak, fear rises — because then fear is needed to restrain them from sin, to stir them to care for their souls, and to move them toward watchfulness and diligence in the Christian life. But God has ordered it so that when love rises and is in vigorous exercise, fear vanishes and is driven away — for then fear is not needed, since a higher and more excellent principle is at work restraining them from sin and stirring them to duty. The only two principles under whose influence human nature ever falls are love and fear. Therefore, if one of these did not rise as the other fell, God's people would be dangerously exposed whenever they were in dead and carnal frames with love asleep. God has wisely ordained that these two opposite principles — love and fear — should rise and fall like

the two opposite sides of a scale: when one rises, the other sinks. Just as light and darkness necessarily and unavoidably follow each other — as light prevails, darkness recedes by exactly that much, and as light decays, darkness advances by exactly that much — so it is in the heart of a child of God. If divine love slumbers and falls asleep while lust prevails, light and joy vanish and dark fear and doubt arise. If, on the contrary, divine love prevails and comes into lively exercise, it brings in the brightness of hope and drives away both dark lust and fear. Love is the spirit of adoption — the spirit of a child; if it slumbers, people fall under fear, which is the spirit of bondage — the spirit of a slave. And if the spirit of adoption is carried to a great height, it completely drives away all fear and brings full assurance, in keeping with the apostle's words in 1 John 4:18: 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.' These two opposite principles — lust and holy love — bring hope and fear into the hearts of God's children in proportion as they prevail, when left to their own natural influence without something intervening from outside, such as the disorder of melancholy, ignorance, prejudices from upbringing, wrong teaching, or particular temptations.

Fear is driven out by God's Spirit in no other way than by the prevailing of love, and it is never sustained by His Spirit when love is asleep. At such a time, all the saint's self-examination and scrutiny of past experience in order to establish peace and full assurance is in vain. It is simply contrary to the nature of things as God has constituted them for a person to have assurance at such a time.

Those who teach others to be confident in their spiritual state while in darkness — under the guise of living by faith and not by sight, trusting God in the dark, living on Christ, and not doubting

their good estate lest they commit the dreadful sin of unbelief — are directly working against God's wise and gracious design. This teaching tends to settle the most presumptuous hypocrites in their delusion and to prevent them from ever examining their state, no matter how much wickedness prevails in their hearts and lives — all under the banner of honoring God by hoping against hope and trusting in Him when things look very dark. The harm done in this way has undoubtedly been immense.

People cannot be said to forsake Christ and live on their experiences of God's grace merely because they use those experiences as evidence that they are gracious — for there is no other kind of evidence available. But they may be said to live on their experiences when they make a righteousness of them: instead of keeping their eyes on God's glory and Christ's excellency, they turn their eyes from those external objects to themselves, entertaining their minds by reviewing their own attainments, high experiences, and great spiritual encounters. In this state they appear bright and beautiful in their own eyes, rich and increasing in their own estimation, and they imagine that God regards them with the same admiring esteem they have for themselves. This is living on experiences and not on Christ, and it is more abominable in God's sight than the open immorality of those who make no pretense to religion. But this is a very different thing from simply using experiences as evidence of one's interest in a glorious Redeemer.

But to return from this digression — let me mention one more thing under this general heading.

Twelfth sign that proves nothing: the outward display of a person's religious affections, and the account they give of them, greatly moves and pleases truly godly people, winning their hearts

and gaining their approval.

True saints do not have such a discerning spirit that they can certainly tell who is godly and who is not. Though they know by personal experience what true religion looks like in its internal exercises, those are things they can neither feel nor see in another person's heart. The only thing they can observe in others is outward conduct and appearances, and Scripture plainly indicates that judging what is in a person by outward appearances is at best uncertain and liable to error (1 Samuel 16:7): 'The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' Isaiah 11:3 likewise says: 'He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear.' Those who are quick and forceful in pronouncing on people's spiritual states, boasting of an extraordinary faculty for discernment in these serious matters as though everything were open and clear to them, are usually poor judges and dangerous counselors in matters of the soul. They reveal one of three things: either they have had little experience, or they are persons of weak judgment, or they have a great degree of pride and self-confidence along with deep ignorance of themselves. Wise and experienced people proceed with great caution in such matters.

When there are many probable signs of genuine faith in others, it is the duty of the saints to receive them warmly into their love, welcoming them as brothers and sisters in Christ. But even the best of people may be deceived when appearances seem exceedingly bright and genuine — so much so that their approval is fully won and their hearts are completely taken. It has been common in the church for such bright professors, received and honored as eminent saints among the saints, to fall away and come to nothing.

This should not surprise us given everything already observed — all the things that have been shown may appear in people who are entirely without grace. Nothing prevents all of these things from meeting together in a person while not a spark of grace exists in his heart. Such a person may have religious affections of many kinds at once — a kind of affection toward God bearing a strong resemblance to genuine love for Him, a kind of love toward fellow believers, great apparent admiration of God's perfections and works, sorrow for sin, reverence, submission, self-abasement, gratitude, joy, religious longings, and zeal for the cause of religion and the good of souls. These affections may come after powerful awakenings and convictions of conscience, with great apparent signs of humiliation. Counterfeit love and joy and other affections may then seem to follow these convictions, and one another, in the same order commonly seen in the genuine affections of true converts. These religious affections may be carried to a great height, producing abundant tears, and may even overwhelm those who experience them, making them warm and fervent and fluent in speaking about the things of God. They may be attended by many sweet scripture texts and precious promises brought with great force to the mind, and may dispose a person to praise and glorify God with ardent words and to call on others earnestly to praise Him, crying out about their own unworthiness and extolling free grace. They may further dispose the person to abound in the external duties of religion — prayer, hearing the Word preached, singing, and religious conversation — all accompanied by a strong resemblance of a genuine Christian assurance at its highest, as when the saints mount on eagles' wings above all darkness and doubt. It has, I believe, been made plain that all of these things

may be present, and yet there be nothing more than the common influences of God's Spirit combined with the delusions of Satan and the wicked and deceitful heart. To all this may be added: a pleasant natural temperament, a sound doctrinal knowledge of religion, long familiarity with the way the saints speak and express their affections and experiences, a natural ability and cleverness in adapting their expressions to the dispositions and ideas of their hearers, and a pleasing, decent manner of expression and behavior formed by a good upbringing. How great, then, may the resemblance be in all outward expressions and appearances between a hypocrite and a true saint! It is surely the glorious privilege of the omniscient God, as the great searcher of hearts, to be able to separate sheep from goats. How indecent, self-exalting, and arrogant it is for poor, fallible, limited human beings to claim they can determine and know who is truly sincere and upright before God and who is not!

Many people place great weight on this and consider it a reliable way to judge another person's genuine faith: not only does the person tell a plausible story, but in giving an account of their experiences they speak in such a way that the listener feels their talk — that is, it resonates with the listener's own experience, touching and affecting and delighting his heart, and drawing out warm love toward them. But such things do not carry the certainty or dependability that many suppose. A true saint delights greatly in holiness — it is, in his eyes, a most beautiful thing. And God's work of savingly renewing a poor, formerly perishing soul, making it holy and happy, appears to him a most glorious work. No wonder, then, that his heart is touched and greatly moved when he hears another give a convincing account of this work done in his own heart, or when

he sees in that person probable signs of holiness — whether those pleasing appearances have anything real behind them or not. If the person uses the words commonly used to express the affections of true saints, and describes many things following one another in an order that matches the pattern of the listener's own experience, and speaks freely, boldly, and with an air of assurance — no wonder the listener thinks his experiences match his own. And if, beyond all this, the person speaks with much feeling in giving his account, and above all shows great warmth and affection toward the person he is speaking with — the kind the Galatians showed to the apostle Paul — these things will naturally have a powerful effect, moving the listener's heart and opening wide the doors of his approval. David speaks as one who had felt Ahithophel's talk and once savored it. Therefore his surprise and disappointment when Ahithophel fell was overwhelming — it was almost more than he could bear. He expresses it in Psalm 55:12-14: 'It was not an enemy — then I could have borne it — but it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my close friend; we took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in the company of others.'

People who profess religion — especially those who do so during a time of outpouring of God's Spirit — are like the blossoms in spring. There are vast numbers of them on the trees, and they all look fair and promising. But many of them never come to anything. Many that will in a short time wither and fall from the tree look just as beautiful and bright as the others for a while — and not only that, but they are fragrant and send forth a pleasant scent, so that none of our senses can certainly tell which blossoms carry that hidden vitality that will later appear as fruit, or that inward substance and strength that will allow them to bear and be perfected

by the hot summer sun that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit that comes afterward, not the beautiful color and fragrance of the blossom, that we must judge by. In the same way, new converts — or those who profess to be — may in their talk about religious things appear beautiful and seem very genuine, and the saints may think they speak from real experience. They may relish the talk, imagining they perceive something divine in it — and yet it may all come to nothing.

It is remarkable how reluctant people are to be content with the rules and directions Christ has given them, insisting instead on going by other rules of their own invention that seem to them wiser and better. I know of no directions that Christ has delivered more plainly than the rules He has given us for judging others' sincerity — namely, that we should judge the tree chiefly by its fruit. But this is not accepted; other methods are devised, imagined to be more reliable and discerning. The harmful consequences of placing human wisdom above the wisdom of Christ have been severe. I believe many saints have strayed far from the path of Christ's Word in this regard, and some of them have been driven back by painful discipline. But much of what has recently appeared, and continues to appear, should convince us that ordinarily those who have gone furthest in this direction — most proud of their supposed faculty for discernment, most quick and forceful and rash in pronouncing on the state of people's souls — have turned out to be hypocrites who knew nothing of true religion.

In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, Matthew 13:26 says: 'When the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then the tares appeared also.' As John Flavel observes, this indicates that the tares were not distinguishable from the wheat until that point. He

cites Jerome's observation that wheat and tares are so alike until the wheat's blade brings forth the ear that it is nearly impossible to tell them apart. Flavel then adds that however difficult it may be for the eye to distinguish wheat from tares, it is far easier than the sharpest and most penetrating human eye discerning the difference between special and common grace. For every saving grace in the saints has its counterfeit in hypocrites — there are resembling works in hypocrites that even a spiritually discerning and highly experienced eye may easily mistake for the genuine, saving effects of a sanctifying Spirit.

Just as it is the ear or the fruit that distinguishes wheat from tares, so fruit is the true shibboleth — the test that the Judge at the passages of the Jordan uses to distinguish those who will cross over into the true Canaan from those who will be slain at the river. The Hebrew word 'shibboleth' means an ear of grain. Perhaps the fuller, correct pronunciation of 'shibboleth' by Jephthah's friends represents a full ear with grain in it, symbolizing the fruits of the friends of Christ, the antitype of Jephthah. And the thinner, mispronounced 'sibboleth' of his Ephraimite enemies represents their empty ears, symbolizing the mere appearance of religion in hypocrites — all show and no substance or fruit. This aligns with the doctrine Scripture repeatedly teaches: that the One appointed to judge all who pass through death, determining whether they have a right to enter the heavenly Canaan or will be cut off, will judge every person according to his works.

The rules given to the priest for discerning leprosy teach us the same thing. In many cases it was impossible for the priest to determine by even the most careful examination of visible signs whether a man had leprosy or was clean, until he had waited to see how the

signs developed — shutting the man up for seven days at a time — and when he finally rendered judgment, he did so based on the hair growing out of the spot, which was, as it were, the fruit the spot brought forth.

Before finishing what I have to say under this heading, I want to address a strange notion that some have lately embraced: the idea that one can certainly know another person's good spiritual state because it has been revealed from heaven through an extraordinary flowing out of love toward them. The reasoning goes like this: the love they feel is very strong and evident, so they can be certain it is true Christian love. And if it is true Christian love, the Spirit of God must be its author. And since the Spirit of God — who knows certainly whether others are children of God or not, and who is the Spirit of truth — has been pleased by an unusual influence to cause their love to flow out in an extraordinary way toward this person as a child of God, then this infallible Spirit, who never deceives, must know that the person is indeed a child of God. But those holding this view could be convinced of the flaw in their reasoning if they would consider whether it is not their duty — what God requires of them — to love as children of God those who, by all appearances, seem to be children of God and whom they have no reason to think otherwise.

Even if God, who searches the heart, knows such people are not His children, it is still the duty of others to love them as such based on what is visible. If it is their duty, then doing it is good and failing to do it is sin — and therefore the Spirit of God may certainly be the author of that love. The Spirit of God can, without being a spirit of falsehood, assist a person in doing his duty and keeping him from sin in such a case. But then these people argue

from the unusual degree and special manner in which their love flows out to the person, which they think the Spirit of God would never cause if He did not know the object to be a child of God. Let me ask them, then: is it not their duty to love all those whom they are bound to regard as children of God, based on everything they can see, to a very great degree — even if God, from other things He sees that are hidden from them, knows those persons are not His? It is people's duty to love all those whom they are bound in charity to regard as children of God with a far greater warmth of affection than they commonly do. Just as we ought to love Christ to the full capacity of our nature, so it is our duty to love those we believe are as near and dear to Him as His members with an exceedingly deep affection, as Christ has loved us — and therefore it is sin in us not to love them so. We ought to pray that God by His Spirit would keep us from sin and enable us to do our duty. May not His Spirit answer those prayers and enable us to do our duty in a particular instance without lying? If He cannot, then the Spirit of God is prevented from helping His people do their duty in some instances because He cannot do so without becoming a spirit of falsehood — but surely God is sovereign enough to enable us to do our duty when He pleases and on what occasion He pleases. When people believe others are God's children, He may have other purposes in causing their deep love to flow out toward them, besides revealing whether their assessment is correct. He may have the merciful purpose of enabling them to do their duty and keeping them from the great evil of sin. Will they say God may not show them that mercy in such a case? Suppose I am away from home and hear that in my absence my house has burned down, but my family escaped the flames in some remarkable way — and everything about the ac-

count as I heard it makes it very believable. It would be sin for me in such a case not to feel great gratitude to God, even if the report turns out to be false. And is not God sovereign enough to show me that mercy on such an occasion, enabling me to do my duty to a far greater degree than usual, without being charged with deception for having confirmed a falsehood?

It is very clear that an error or mistake may occasion a genuine exercise of grace, and therefore a genuine influence of the Spirit of God, as Romans 14:6 shows: 'He who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.' The apostle is speaking about those who, through mistaken and unnecessary scruples, avoided eating meat that was ceremonially unclean. This makes it evident that there may be true exercises of grace — true regard to the Lord, and particularly true thankfulness — that are occasioned by both an erroneous judgment and erroneous practice. Consequently, an error may be the occasion of those genuinely holy exercises that flow from the infallible Spirit of God. If that is so, it is certainly not for us to determine to how great a degree the Spirit of God may grant such holy exercise on such an occasion.

This notion of certainly discerning another person's spiritual state by an outflow of love is not only without support from reason or Scripture — it is contrary to Scripture. Scripture says nothing whatsoever about this as a way of judging another's spiritual state, but instead directs us to judge chiefly by the fruits we observe in them. It also contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture, which plainly tells us that the state of another person's soul toward God is not something we can know. Revelation 2:17 says: 'To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give

him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' Romans 2:29 says: 'He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.' The phrase 'his praise is not from men, but from God' refers to the inability of men to judge whether a person is inwardly a Jew — just as they could easily see by outward marks who was outwardly a Jew — and indicates that it belongs to God alone to render a decisive judgment in this matter. This is confirmed by Paul's use of the same phrase in 1 Corinthians 4:5: 'Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.' In the two preceding verses Paul says: 'But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.' This is further confirmed because in Romans 2, Paul addresses his remarks specifically to those who had a high opinion of their own holiness, boasted in God, and were confident in their discernment — certain that they knew God's will and could approve what was excellent, or test what was different. Verse 18 tells us they were confident they were guides to the blind, a light to those in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of children — and so took it upon themselves to judge others (see Romans 2:1 and 17-20).

How arrogant, then, is the notion held by those who imagine they can certainly know another person's godliness — when the great apostle Peter ventures no stronger claim about Silvanus than that he was 'a faithful brother, as I consider him' (1 Peter 5:12). This Silvanus appears to have been a very prominent minister of Christ, an evangelist, and a celebrated light in God's church at that time, and a close companion of the apostles. See 2 Corinthians 1:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, and 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

PART 3



PART 3

I now come to the second part of the examination of religious affections — taking note of some things in which affections that are spiritual and gracious differ from those that are not.

Before moving directly to the distinguishing characteristics, I want to mention a few things I hope will be kept in mind regarding the marks I am about to lay down.

First, I am far from claiming to give signs of gracious affections sufficient to enable anyone to distinguish true affections from false in other people, or to determine positively which of their neighbors are genuine professors and which are hypocrites. To do so would be to commit the very arrogance I have been condemning. Christ has certainly given rules to all Christians that enable them to judge the professors of religion they deal with, to the extent necessary for their own safety and to keep them from being led astray by false teachers and false professors of religion. And Scripture clearly abounds with rules that can be very useful to ministers in counseling and guiding the souls under their care in matters relating to their spiritual and eternal condition. Yet it is equally clear that God never intended to give us rules by which we can certainly know

which of our fellow professors are truly His, or make a full and clear separation between sheep and goats. On the contrary, God reserved this as His own prerogative. No distinguishing signs that would enable Christians or ministers to do this are ever to be expected until the end of the world — for no more is ever to be expected from any signs found in or gathered from God's Word than Christ designed them for.

Second, no signs are to be expected that will enable those saints who are very low in grace, or who have strayed far from God and fallen into a dead and carnal spiritual state, to know their good standing with certainty. As already observed, it is not in keeping with God's design that such people should know their good standing. Nor is it desirable that they should — on the contrary, it is best in every way that they should not. We have reason to bless God that He has made no provision for such people to know their standing with certainty by any means other than first coming out of the bad frame and bad way they are in.

It is not actually due to any defect in the signs God's Word provides that even every living saint — whether strong or weak, and whether in a bad frame or not — cannot certainly know their good standing by those signs. For the rules are in themselves certain and infallible, and every saint has, or has had, within himself the things that are sure evidence of grace — for even the smallest act of grace is such evidence. The defect lies with the person to whom the signs are given. There is a twofold defect in the saint who is very low in grace or in a bad frame, which makes it impossible for him to know with certainty that he has true grace even with the best signs and rules that could be given. The first is a defect in the object — that is, in the quality being examined. I do not mean an essential

defect, since I assume the person is a real saint — but a defect of degree: grace that is very small cannot be clearly and certainly seen and distinguished. Things that are very small cannot have their form clearly seen or distinguished from one another, even if in themselves they are very different. There is doubtless a great difference between a human embryo and the embryos of other animals at the earliest stage of development in the womb. But if we were to examine different embryos at that stage, it might be impossible to see the difference, because the object is in such an imperfect state. As the embryo develops further, the difference becomes very plain. The contrast between creatures of very different qualities is not as clearly seen while they are very young — even after birth — as it will be in their more fully developed state. The difference between doves and ravens, or doves and vultures, when they first come out of the egg, is not obvious; but as they mature toward their full nature, it becomes enormous and unmistakable. Another defect in those I am describing is that their grace is so intermingled with corruption that it is clouded and hidden, making it impossible to know with certainty. Even if two things before us have many marks that thoroughly distinguish them from each other, if we observe them through thick smoke it may still be impossible to tell them apart. A fixed star is easily distinguished from a comet in a clear sky, but if we observe them through a cloud it may be impossible to see the difference. When true Christians are in a bad frame, guilt lies on the conscience, which produces fear and prevents the peace and joy of assured hope.

The second defect is in the eye. Just as the weakness of grace and the prevalence of corruption obscures the object being examined, it also weakens the sight — darkening it with respect to all

spiritual objects, of which grace is one. Sin is like certain eye conditions that make things appear in colors other than their true ones, and like many sicknesses that affect the sense of taste, making a person unable to distinguish good and wholesome food from bad — everything tastes bitter. People in a corrupt and carnal frame have their spiritual senses in poor condition for judging and distinguishing spiritual things.

For these reasons, no signs that can be given will actually satisfy people in such a condition. No matter how good, reliable, and clearly stated those signs may be, they will not serve such a person. It is like giving a man instructions for how to distinguish visible objects in the dark: the objects themselves may be very different, and the differences may be clearly described to him, yet all of this is insufficient to help him distinguish them — because he is in the dark. Therefore many people in such a condition waste their time in fruitless effort — poring over past experiences and examining themselves by signs they hear from the pulpit or read in books — when there is other work that is far more required of them. While they neglect that other work, all their self-examination is likely to be in vain no matter how much time they spend on it. The accursed thing must be removed from their camp, and Achan must be slain — until this is done they will be in trouble. It is not God's design that people should obtain assurance in any other way than by putting corruption to death, growing in grace, and obtaining its lively exercise. And although self-examination is a duty of great value and importance that should by no means be neglected, it is not the primary means by which the saints gain confidence in their spiritual standing. Assurance is not obtained so much by self-examination as by action. The apostle Paul sought assurance primar-

ily this way — by forgetting what was behind and reaching forward to what was ahead, pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, by any means attaining to the resurrection from the dead. And it was primarily by this means that he obtained assurance, as 1 Corinthians 9:26 shows: 'Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim.' He obtained assurance of winning the prize more by running than by reflecting. The swiftness of his pace did more for his assurance of victory than the carefulness of his self-examination. Peter's instruction for making our calling and election sure, and for having an entrance richly supplied into Christ's eternal kingdom, is to give all diligence to grow in grace — adding to faith, virtue, and so on. This tells us that without this effort, our eyes will be dim and we will be like people in the dark, unable to clearly see either the forgiveness of past sins or the heavenly inheritance that lies ahead in the distance (2 Peter 1:5-11).

Therefore, while good rules for distinguishing true grace from counterfeit may help convince hypocrites and be of great value to the saints in many ways — including removing unnecessary doubts and strengthening hope — I am far from claiming to lay down rules that would be sufficient on their own, without other means, to enable all true saints to see their good standing, or from suggesting they would be the primary means of their assurance.

Third, there is also little encouragement from experience — past or present — to lay down rules for distinguishing between true and false affections in hopes of convincing a significant number of those hypocrites who have been deceived by great false discoveries and affections and have settled into a false confidence with a high opinion of their own supposed experiences and privileges. Such

hypocrites are so proud of their own wisdom, so blinded and hardened by a deep self-righteousness — very subtle and hidden beneath the disguise of great humility — and so stubbornly attached to their pleasing delusion of great spiritual elevation, that presenting even the most convincing evidence of their hypocrisy usually accomplishes nothing at all. Their condition is deplorable and next to that of those who have committed the unpardonable sin. Some of this kind of person seem to be almost entirely beyond the reach of the means of conviction and repentance. Yet laying down good rules may prevent such hypocrisy in others and may convince many hypocrites of other kinds. God is able to convict even this kind, and His grace is not to be limited, nor means to be neglected. Beyond this, such rules may be useful to true saints in detecting false affections that may be mixed in with genuine ones, and may be a means of making their religion more pure — like gold refined in the fire.

Having noted these things, I now proceed directly to examine the ways in which true religious affections are distinguished from false ones.

First distinguishing sign: affections that are truly spiritual and gracious arise from influences and operations on the heart that are spiritual, supernatural, and divine.

I will explain what I mean by these terms, which will show their usefulness for distinguishing spiritual affections from those that are not.

In the New Testament, true saints — those sanctified by God's Spirit — are called spiritual people, and being spiritual is spoken of as their distinctive character, the quality that sets them apart from

the unsanctified. This is clear because spiritual people are contrasted with natural people and carnal people. The spiritual man and the natural man are set in opposition to each other in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15: 'A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things.' Scripture makes clear that 'natural man' means an ungodly person — one without grace. Jude, speaking of certain ungodly men who had crept in unnoticed among the saints (verse 4 of his epistle), says in verse 19: 'These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.' The apostle gives this as the reason for their wicked behavior. The word translated 'worldly-minded' in the original Greek is *psychikos*, the very same word translated 'natural' in those verses in 1 Corinthians 2. In the same discourse, a few verses later, spiritual men are contrasted with carnal men — which the context shows means the same thing as spiritual men and natural men in the preceding verses. Paul says: 'And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh' — that is, as in large measure unsanctified. That 'carnal' means corrupt and unsanctified is clear here and also from Romans 7:25 and 8:1, 4-6, where the flesh refers to what is corrupt and sinful, while the spiritual, which is opposed to it, is of the Spirit and holy.

Just as people are called spiritual in Scripture, so we also find that certain properties, qualities, and principles are given that name — such as a spiritual mind, spiritual understanding, and spiritual wisdom (Colossians 1:9), and spiritual things.

Notice that the word 'spiritual' in these and other parallel New Testament passages is not used to describe the relationship of persons or things to the human spirit or soul. Things are not called spiritual because they have their seat in the soul rather than the body. Some qualities Scripture calls fleshly or carnal actually have their seat largely in the soul — just as much as the qualities called spiritual. Pride, self-righteousness, and trusting in one's own wisdom are examples: the apostle calls these fleshly in Colossians 2:18. Nor are things called spiritual because they deal with immaterial rather than physical subjects. The wisdom of the wise men and rulers of this world was concerned with spirits and immaterial beings — and yet the apostle speaks of these men as natural, entirely ignorant of things that are spiritual (1 Corinthians 2). Rather, in the New Testament, persons and things are called spiritual in relation to the Holy Spirit — the Spirit of God. The word 'Spirit,' referring to the third person of the Trinity, is the root from which the adjective 'spiritual' is formed in Scripture. Christians are therefore called spiritual persons because they are born of the Spirit and because the Spirit of God indwells them and exerts His holy influence in them. Things are called spiritual as they relate to the Spirit of God, as 1 Corinthians 2:13-14 shows: 'These things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.' The apostle himself here expressly indicates that by 'spiritual things' he means 'the things of the Spirit of God' and 'the things which the Holy Spirit teaches.' This is even more fully clear by reading the whole context. Romans 8:6 says the same: 'For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life

and peace.' The apostle explains what he means by being carnally and spiritually minded in verse 9, showing that being spiritually minded means having the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart and exerting His holy influence there: 'However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.' The same is evident throughout the whole context. There is abundant evidence of this throughout the New Testament, though there is not space to gather it all here.

It must be noted, however, that not everyone subject to any kind of influence of the Spirit of God is ordinarily called spiritual in the New Testament. Only those who have the special, gracious, and saving influences of God's Spirit are called spiritual — not those who only have His common influences. This is clear because, as already shown, spiritual men in the passages cited means godly men, in contrast to natural, carnal, and unsanctified men. It is also entirely plain that in Romans 8:6 the apostle means by 'spiritually minded' something like 'graciously minded.' And although the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which natural people can also have, are sometimes called spiritual because they come from the Spirit, yet natural people — whatever gifts of the Spirit they possessed — were not in ordinary New Testament usage called spiritual persons. What made people spiritual was not having the gifts of the Spirit but having the virtues of the Spirit, as Galatians 6:1 makes clear: 'Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.' Gentleness is one of the virtues Paul had just listed in the preced-

ing verses as fruits of the Spirit. In New Testament language, the qualities called spiritual are those that are truly gracious and holy — and unique to the saints.

So when we read of spiritual wisdom and understanding, as in Colossians 1:9 — 'We pray that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding' — the wisdom intended is that which is gracious and produced by the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God. By 'spiritual wisdom' is clearly meant the opposite of what Scripture calls natural wisdom, just as the spiritual man is the opposite of the natural man. Spiritual wisdom is therefore the same as the wisdom from above that James speaks of in James 3:17: 'The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle.' This James contrasts with natural wisdom in verse 15: 'This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural' — and the original word translated 'natural' here is the same as the word translated 'natural' in 1 Corinthians 2:14.

So then, though natural people may be subject to many influences of the Spirit of God — as many scriptures make clear, including Numbers 24:2, 1 Samuel 10:10 and 11:6 and 16:14, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Hebrews 6:4-6, and others — they are not spiritual persons in the scriptural sense, and none of the common gifts, qualities, or affections that result from the Spirit's influence on them are called spiritual things. The great difference lies in two things.

First, the Spirit of God is given to the true saints to dwell in them as His proper and lasting home, influencing their hearts as a principle of new nature — a divine, supernatural spring of life and action. Scripture presents the Holy Spirit not merely as occasion-

ally moving on the saints and influencing them at times, but as dwelling in them as His temple, His proper and everlasting dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Corinthians 6:16, John 14:16-17). He is represented as so united to the faculties of the soul that He becomes there a principle and spring of new nature and life.

The saints are said to live by Christ living in them (Galatians 2:20). Christ by His Spirit is not only in them but lives in them — and so they live by His life. His Spirit is so united to them as a principle of life that they do not merely drink living water; rather, this living water becomes within the soul 'a well of water springing up to eternal life' (John 4:14), and so becomes a principle of life within them. This Evangelist himself explains in John 7:38-39 that this living water means the Spirit of God. The light of the Sun of Righteousness does not merely shine on the saints from the outside — it is so communicated to them that they themselves shine and become small images of the Sun that shines on them. The sap of the true Vine is not conveyed into them as sap might be poured into a container, but as sap flows from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a principle of life. The Spirit of God being thus communicated to and united with the saints, they are rightly named after Him and called spiritual.

On the other hand, though the Spirit of God may influence natural people in many ways, He is not communicated to them as an indwelling principle, and so they receive no character or name from Him — for without that union, His presence is not their own. Light may shine on a body that is very dark or black, and though that body is the subject of the light, yet since the light does not become a principle of light within it to cause it to shine, the body does not rightly take its name from the light and is not called a lu-

minous body. In the same way, the Spirit of God acting on the soul without communicating Himself as an active principle within it cannot make it spiritual. Just as a body that remains black may be said not to have light — even though light shines on it — so natural people are said to be 'devoid of the Spirit' (Jude 19): 'These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.'

Second — and this is the most important point — the saints and their virtues are called spiritual because the Spirit of God, dwelling as a living principle in their souls, produces in them those effects in which He expresses and communicates Himself according to His own proper nature. Holiness is the nature of the Spirit of God, which is why He is called in Scripture the Holy Spirit. Holiness — which is, as it were, the beauty and sweetness of the divine nature — is as truly the proper nature of the Holy Spirit as heat is the nature of fire, or as sweetness was the nature of the holy anointing oil, which was the principal type of the Holy Spirit in the Mosaic economy. I may even say more precisely: holiness is as much the proper nature of the Holy Spirit as sweetness was the nature of the fragrance of that oil. The Spirit of God so dwells in the hearts of the saints that He there, as a seed or spring of life, expresses and communicates Himself in this His sweet and divine nature, making the soul a partaker of God's beauty and Christ's joy, so that the saint truly has fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, through this communion and participation in the Holy Spirit. The grace that is in the hearts of the saints is of the same nature as divine holiness, as much as it is possible for holiness to be the same when it is infinitely smaller in degree — just as the brightness in a diamond that the sun shines upon is of the same nature as the brightness of the sun, even though it is nothing

compared to it in degree. Therefore Christ says in John 3:6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit' — meaning that the grace produced in the hearts of the saints is of the same nature as that Spirit, and so is rightly called a spiritual nature, in the same way that what is born of the flesh is flesh, or what is born of corrupt nature is corrupt nature.

But the Spirit of God never influences the minds of natural people in this way. Though He may influence them in many ways, He never in any of those influences communicates Himself to them in His own proper nature. He never acts contrary to His nature — not in His dealings with saints or sinners alike. But the Spirit may act on people in a manner consistent with His nature without actually communicating Himself in His proper nature through the effect of that action. For example, the Spirit moved on the face of the waters at creation, and there was nothing in that action contrary to His nature — yet He did not communicate Himself in that action; there was nothing of the Holy Spirit's proper nature in the movement of the waters. In the same way, He may act on the minds of people in many ways without communicating Himself any more than when He acts on inanimate things.

So then the difference is not only in the manner in which the Spirit relates to the subject of His operations — operating in the saints as a permanent indwelling principle of action, whereas He does not operate that way in sinners. The influence and operation itself is different, and the effect produced is vastly different. So it is not only that persons are called spiritual because the Spirit of God dwells in them, but the qualities, affections, and experiences wrought in them by the Spirit are also spiritual. These differ enormously in their very nature and kind from anything that a natural

person is or can be the subject of while remaining in a natural state, and also from anything that human beings or demons could produce. It is a spiritual work in this high sense, and therefore supremely beyond all other works in being unique to the Spirit of God. No work is so high and excellent — for there is no work in which God so fully communicates Himself, and in which the creature, in so high a sense, participates in God. This is expressed in Scripture by phrases such as 'becoming partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4), 'God dwelling in them and they in God' (1 John 4:12, 15, 16 and 3:21), 'having Christ in them' (John 17:21, Romans 8:10), 'being the temple of the living God' (2 Corinthians 6:16), 'living by Christ's life' (Galatians 2:20), 'being made partakers of God's holiness' (Hebrews 12:10), 'having Christ's love dwelling in them' (John 17:26), 'having His joy fulfilled in them' (John 17:13), 'seeing light in God's light' and 'drinking from the river of God's pleasures' (Psalm 36:8-9), and 'having fellowship with God' — that is, communicating and participating in Him (1 John 1:3). This does not mean that the saints are made partakers of the very essence of God — as if they were 'Goddied with God' and 'Christed with Christ,' according to the blasphemous language of certain heretics. Rather, using the Scripture's own phrase, they are made partakers of God's fullness (Ephesians 3:17-19, John 1:16) — that is, of God's spiritual beauty and happiness, according to the measure and capacity of a creature, for that is evidently what 'fullness' means in scriptural usage. Because grace in the hearts of the saints is therefore God's most glorious work — the work in which He most fully communicates the goodness of His nature — it is without doubt uniquely His own work, eminently above the power of all creatures. And the Spirit's influences in this work being thus unique to

God, being those in which God so fully communicates Himself and makes the creature a partaker of the divine nature, with the Spirit communicating Himself in His own proper nature — this is what I mean by 'divine' when I say that truly gracious affections arise from influences that are spiritual and divine.

Only the true saints have what is spiritual — others have nothing divine in the sense just described. They not only lack these communications of the Spirit of God to a lesser degree; they have nothing of that nature or kind at all. James tells us that natural people do not have the Spirit. Christ teaches the necessity of the new birth — being born of the Spirit — on the grounds that what is born of the flesh has only flesh and no Spirit (John 3:6). Natural people do not have the Spirit of God dwelling in them in any degree, for the apostle teaches that all who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them belong to Him (Romans 8:9-11). Having the Spirit of God is presented as a certain sign of the eternal inheritance — it is called the pledge of that inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5, Ephesians 1:14). And having anything of the Spirit is mentioned as a sure sign of being in Christ (1 John 4:13): 'By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.' Ungodly people not only have less of the divine nature than the saints — they do not partake of it at all, which implies they have nothing of it, since being a partaker of the divine nature is spoken of as the unique privilege of the true saints (2 Peter 1:4). Ungodly people are not partakers of God's holiness (Hebrews 12:10). A natural person has no experience of any spiritual things — the apostle tells us that such a person is so far from this that he knows nothing about them, is entirely a stranger to them, and finds all such talk foolish and incomprehensible (1

Corinthians 2:14): 'A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.' Christ teaches the same, saying that the world is entirely unacquainted with the Spirit of God (John 14:17): 'The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him.' It is further evident that natural people have nothing of the same nature as true grace, because the apostle teaches that even the most religious among them have no love — no true Christian love (1 Corinthians 13). Christ likewise rebuked the Pharisees — those prominent claimants to religion — saying they did not have the love of God in them (John 5:42). Therefore natural people have no communion or fellowship with Christ, no participation in Him — for this is spoken of as the unique privilege of the saints (1 John 1:3 with verses 6-7 and 1 Corinthians 1:8-9). Scripture speaks of the actual presence of a gracious principle in the soul — even in its first beginnings, as a seed planted there — as something incompatible with a person's being a sinner (1 John 3:9). And natural people are described in Scripture as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, and no spiritual existence — which is why conversion is often compared to opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and a work of new creation in which creatures are made entirely new and become newborn children.

From all this it is clear that the gracious influences the saints experience, and the effects of God's Spirit they know, are entirely above nature — altogether different in kind from anything people find within themselves by nature or through the exercise of natural capacities alone. No improvement of natural qualities or principles, no elevating or advancing them to higher degrees, and no

combination of them, could ever bring people to these things. This is because they differ from what is natural, and from everything that natural people experience, not only in degree and circumstances but in kind — and they are of a vastly more excellent nature. This is what I mean by 'supernatural' when I say that gracious affections arise from influences that are supernatural.

From this it follows that in the gracious exercises and affections produced in the minds of the saints through the Spirit's saving influences, there is a new inward perception or sensation of the mind — entirely different in its nature and kind from anything those minds experienced before being sanctified. If God by His mighty power produces something new — not only in degree and circumstances but in its whole nature, something that could be produced by no elevating, varying, or combining of what was previously there — and if God produces this in a mind that is perceiving, thinking, and conscious, then something entirely new is felt, perceived, or thought. In other words, there is a new sensation or perception of the mind that is entirely of a new sort, which could be produced by no elevating, varying, or combining of the kinds of perceptions or sensations the mind had before. This is what some philosophers call a new simple idea. If grace is, in the sense described above, an entirely new kind of principle, then the exercises of it are also entirely a new kind of exercise. And if there are in the soul new kinds of exercises it is conscious of — which the soul knew nothing of before, and which no improving, combining, or rearranging of its previous conscious experience could produce or even approach — then the mind has an entirely new kind of perception or sensation. There is, as it were, a new spiritual sense that the mind has — a principle of new perception and spiritual sensa-

tion that in its whole nature is different from every former kind of sensation, just as taste is different from every other sense. What a true saint perceives through the exercise of this new sense in spiritual and divine things is as completely different from what natural people perceive in those same things as the sweet taste of honey is different from the impression people get of honey merely by looking at it or touching it. So the spiritual perceptions of a sanctified, spiritual person differ from everything natural people have — not merely as different perceptions of the same sense might differ from each other, but as the perceptions of entirely different senses differ from one another. This is why the Spirit's work in regeneration is so often compared in Scripture to giving a new sense — giving eyes to see, ears to hear, unstopping deaf ears, opening the eyes of those born blind, turning from darkness to light. And because this spiritual sense is immeasurably the most noble and excellent — and without it all other capacities of perception and all our faculties are useless and empty — the giving of this new sense, with its blessed fruits and effects in the soul, is compared to raising the dead and to a new creation.

This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that come with it, are not new faculties but new principles of nature. I use the word 'principles' for lack of a more precise term. By a principle of nature I mean the foundation laid in nature — whether old or new — for any particular kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul: a natural disposition and capacity for action that gives a person the ability and inclination to exercise those faculties in a certain kind of way, so that exercising them in that way may be called his nature. So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new

kind of exercise of the same faculty of understanding. And the new holy dispositions of the heart that accompany this new sense are not a new faculty of the will, but a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercise of the same faculty of the will.

In all His operations on the minds of natural people, the Spirit of God only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or in some way acts upon natural principles — He never infuses a new spiritual principle. For example, when the Spirit gave Balaam visions, He only impressed a natural principle — the sense of sight — immediately producing ideas through that sense. He gave no new sense; there was nothing supernatural, spiritual, or divine about it. Similarly, when the Spirit impresses on a person's imagination — whether in a dream or while awake — any outward sensory images, whether voices, shapes, or colors, He is only stimulating the same kinds of ideas that the person already has through natural principles and senses. When God reveals to a natural person some future fact — something they will later see or hear — this is not infusing or exercising any new spiritual principle or giving ideas through a new spiritual sense. It is only impressing, in an extraordinary way, the same kinds of ideas that will later be received through sight and hearing. In the more ordinary influences of the Spirit on the hearts of sinners, He only assists natural principles to do the same work they do naturally, but to a greater degree. By His common influences the Spirit may assist a person's natural skill, as He assisted Bezaleel and Aholiab in the craftsmanship of the tabernacle. He may enhance people's natural abilities in practical affairs and strengthen natural qualities like courage, as He is said to have put His Spirit on the seventy elders and on Saul — giving him another

heart. God may greatly sharpen natural people's reasoning about secular matters or about the doctrines of religion, greatly increasing the clarity of their understanding of religious things in many respects, without giving any spiritual sense. In the awakenings and convictions that natural people may experience, God is only assisting conscience — a natural principle — to do its normal work to a greater degree. Conscience naturally gives people a sense of right and wrong and suggests that right and wrong actions have corresponding consequences. The Spirit of God assists conscience to do this more powerfully, helping it overcome the numbing influence of worldly concerns and sinful desires. There are many other ways the Spirit acts on, assists, and moves natural principles. But in all of this it is no more than nature moved, acted upon, and improved — there is nothing supernatural or divine. But in the Spirit's spiritual influences on the hearts of the saints, He works by infusing and exercising new, divine, and supernatural principles — principles that are indeed a new and spiritual nature, and principles vastly more noble and excellent than anything found in natural people.

From what has been said it follows that all spiritual and gracious affections are accompanied by, and arise from, some perception, idea, or sensation of the mind that in its whole nature is different — vastly different — from everything that is or can be in the mind of a natural person. The natural person perceives nothing of it and has no idea of it at all (in keeping with 1 Corinthians 2:14), any more than a person without the sense of taste can conceive of the sweetness of honey, or a person without the sense of hearing can conceive of the beauty of a melody, or a person born blind can have any notion of the colors of a rainbow.

Two important qualifications must be observed in order to understand this correctly.

First, on the one hand, not everything that belongs to spiritual affections is new and entirely beyond what natural people can conceive or experience. Some things are common to gracious affections and ordinary human affections — many circumstances, features, and effects are shared. A saint's love to God, for example, has many things in common with a person's natural love for a close family member. Love to God causes a person to desire God's honor and to long to please Him — just as natural love for a friend causes a person to desire that friend's honor and to want to please him. Love to God causes delight in thoughts of God, in the presence of God, desire for conformity to God, and enjoyment of God — much as love for a friend produces similar things. Many more parallels could be noted. Yet the idea the saint has of the loveliness of God, and the sensation and kind of delight he experiences in that vision — which is the very essence and marrow of his love — is unique and completely different from anything a natural person has or can conceive of. Even in the things that seem common, there is something distinctive. Both spiritual and natural love produce desires for the beloved, but they are not the same kind of desires. There is a quality of soul in the spiritual desires of one who loves God that is entirely different from anything in natural desire. Both spiritual and natural love are attended by delight in the beloved, but the sensations of delight are not the same — they are entirely and immensely different. Natural people may form concepts of many things about spiritual affections, but there is something in those affections — a core and essence — of which natural people have no more conception than a person born blind has of colors.

This can be illustrated clearly with the following example. Suppose two men: one is born without the sense of taste, the other has it. The one with taste loves honey and delights greatly in it because he knows its sweetness; the other loves certain sounds and colors. Both loves have many things in common — both produce desire and delight in the beloved object, both cause grief at its absence, and so on. But the idea or sensation the one who knows the taste of honey has of its excellence and sweetness — which is the very foundation of his love — is entirely different from anything the other has or can have. The delight the one feels in honey is completely unlike anything the other can conceive of, even though both delight in their respective beloved objects. Both men may even love the same object — suppose a delicious fruit that is beautiful to the eye and sweet to the taste. The one who can taste loves it both for its beautiful color and for its sweetness; the other, having no taste, loves it only for its color. In many ways they seem to share the same response — both love, both desire, both delight. But the love, desire, and delight of the one are altogether different from those of the other. The difference between the love of a natural person and a spiritual person is something like this, with two important qualifications. In one respect the difference is far greater — the kinds of excellence perceived in spiritual objects by these two different kinds of persons are vastly more distinct from each other than the different kinds of excellence perceived in a delicious fruit by the one who can taste and the one who cannot. In another respect the difference may not be as great — because the spiritual person may have only the beginnings of spiritual sense or taste, perceiving that divine and uniquely excellent quality in only a small and very imperfect degree.

Second, on the other hand, it must be observed that a natural person may have religious perceptions and affections that in many respects are very new and surprising to him — things he had not conceived of before — and yet what he experiences is nothing like the exercise of a new nature or the sensations of a new spiritual sense. His affections may seem very new because natural principles have been stirred in an extraordinary degree, with many new circumstances, a new combination of natural emotions, and a new arrangement of ideas. This may result from some extraordinarily powerful influence of Satan and great delusion — but it is nothing more than nature stirred in an unusual way. Consider this illustration: suppose a poor man who has always lived in a cottage and never seen beyond the small village where he was born is taken in a dream to a magnificent city and royal court, dressed in royal robes, seated on a throne with the crown on his head, with nobles bowing before him, and made to believe he is a glorious monarch. The ideas he would have and the affections he would experience would in many respects be very new — unlike anything he had ever imagined. But all of it is nothing more than natural principles being stirred in an extraordinary way, with natural ideas elevated, varied, and combined in new arrangements. Nothing in any of this is like giving him a new sense.

Taking everything together, I think it is clearly evident that all truly gracious affections arise from special and unique influences of the Spirit, working in the souls of the saints a particular sensation or effect that is entirely different from anything it is possible for a natural person to experience — different not only in degree and circumstances, but in its whole nature. A natural person not only cannot experience what is specifically the same thing, but can

experience nothing that is not vastly different from it and immensely below it in kind. And it is something that neither the power of people nor of demons is sufficient to produce anything resembling, or anything of the same nature.

I have treated this matter at length because it is of great importance and usefulness — clearly exposing and demonstrating Satan's delusions in many kinds of false religious affections that have deceived multitudes, and probably have done so in every age of the Christian church, and also for settling many questions of doctrine concerning the operations of the Spirit of God and the nature of true grace.

Now let me apply these things to the purpose of this discussion.

From this it appears that the impressions made on people's imaginations — the mental images they have of God, Christ, heaven, or anything related to religion — have nothing in them that is spiritual or of the nature of true grace. Though such things may accompany what is spiritual and be mixed with it, they have nothing spiritual in themselves and are no part of genuine spiritual experience.

For the sake of those less familiar with such distinctions, let me explain what I mean by impressions on the imagination and imaginary ideas. The imagination is the power of the mind by which it can form a conception or idea of things that are external — things of the kind perceived by the outward senses — even when those things are not present and are not being perceived. It is called imagination from the word 'image' because by it a person can have an image of some external thing in the mind even when that thing

is not actually present. All the things we perceive through our five external senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch — are external things. When a person has an idea or image of any of these kinds of things in the mind while not actually seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling them, that is to have an imagination of them, and such ideas are imaginary ideas. When such ideas are strongly impressed on the mind and the image of them is very vivid — almost as if one were actually seeing or hearing them — that is called an impression on the imagination. Colors, shapes, and facial features are outward things because they are the kind of things perceived by the outward sense of sight. When a person has a vivid idea of any shape, color, or face in the mind, that is having an imagination of those things. If a person has an idea of any kind of light or darkness such as is perceived by the sense of sight, that is an idea of outward light and is therefore an act of imagination. If a person has an idea of marks on paper — letters and words written in a book — that is having an external, imaginary idea of the kind of things sometimes perceived by the bodily eyes. When a person has ideas of things perceived by the other senses — sounds, voices, or spoken words — that is also only having ideas of outward things: the kind of things perceived by the external sense of hearing, and so that too is imagination. When such ideas are vividly impressed almost as if they were really heard with the ears, that is an impression on the imagination. The same could be said for ideas relating to the other three senses of smell, taste, and touch.

Many who have had such experiences have very mistakenly supposed them to be spiritual discoveries. Some have had vivid ideas of a beautiful external shape or face, and this they call spiritually seeing Christ. Some have had impressed on them ideas of a

great outward light, and this they call a spiritual discovery of God's or Christ's glory. Some have had ideas of Christ hanging on the cross with blood flowing from His wounds, and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ crucified and of the way of salvation through His blood. Some have seen in their minds Christ with His arms open ready to embrace them, and this they call a discovery of the sufficiency of Christ's grace and love. Some have had vivid ideas of heaven, of Christ on His throne, and of shining ranks of saints and angels, and this they call seeing heaven opened to them. Some have from time to time had a vivid idea of a beautiful face smiling at them, and this they call a spiritual discovery of Christ's love for their souls and a tasting of that love. They consider these to be genuine spiritual discoveries and believe they see them spiritually because, they say, they do not see these things with bodily eyes but in their hearts — they can see them when their eyes are closed. Similarly, some have had imagination impressions of the sense of hearing: ideas of words as if spoken to them, sometimes scripture texts and sometimes other words, ideas of Christ speaking comforting words. These things they have called having the inward call of Christ, hearing the voice of Christ spiritually in the heart, having the witness of the Spirit, and the inward testimony of Christ's love, and so on.

Less thoughtful people are more easily led to think these are spiritual experiences partly because spiritual things are invisible and cannot be pointed to, and so we are forced to use figurative language in speaking of them, borrowing names from external and sensory objects. A clear apprehension of spiritual things is called light, and having such an apprehension of something is called seeing it. The conviction of the mind and the persuasion of the heart

through the Word of Christ in the gospel is described as spiritually hearing Christ's call. Scripture itself is full of such figurative expressions. When people often hear these expressions used, and have pressed on them the necessity of having their eyes opened, of having a discovery of spiritual things, of seeing Christ in His glory, of having the inward call, and so on, they ignorantly look and wait for the very kind of external discovery or mental vision just described. When they experience such things, they are convinced that now their eyes have been opened, now Christ has revealed Himself to them, and they are His children. They are then powerfully moved and excited about their deliverance and happiness, and many kinds of emotions are suddenly stirred into motion at once.

But it is very plain that such ideas have nothing in them that is spiritual and divine in the sense in which all gracious experiences have been shown to be spiritual and divine. These external ideas are not at all of the kind that is entirely and in its whole nature different from everything people have by nature — perfectly different from and vastly above any sensation that is possible through any natural sense or principle, so that to receive them one would need a new spiritual and divine sense. Far from that, they are ideas of the same kind that we receive through the external senses, which are among the lower powers of human nature. They are merely ideas of external objects, or ideas of the same outward, sensory kind — the same sort of mental sensations (differing not in kind but only in circumstances) that we receive through the natural principles we share with animals: the five external senses. It is a low and sorry notion of spiritual sense to suppose that it consists in conceiving or imagining the same kind of ideas we receive

through our animal senses — senses that animals possess as fully as we do. It reduces Christ, or the divine nature in the soul, to something merely animal. There is nothing lacking in the soul as it exists by nature that would make it incapable of having all of these external ideas without any new principles. A natural person is just as capable as a regenerate person of having vivid ideas of shapes, colors, and sounds when they are absent — so there is nothing supernatural about such ideas. And abundant experience shows that it is not the advancement or perfection of human nature that makes people more capable of having vivid imaginary impressions; on the contrary, bodily and mental weakness and physical disorders make people far more susceptible to such impressions.

In the case of a truly spiritual sensation, not only is the manner of its coming into the mind extraordinary — the sensation itself is completely unlike anything people have or can have in a state of nature, as has been shown. But as for external ideas, even when they come into the mind in an unusual way, the ideas themselves are not better for that. They are still of no different kind from what people receive through the senses — no higher in nature, not a bit more excellent. For example, the external idea a person now has of Christ hanging on the cross and shedding His blood is no better in itself than the external idea the Jews who were His enemies had as they stood around the cross and watched with their bodily eyes. The imaginary idea people now have of an outward brightness and glory of God is no better than the idea the rebellious congregation in the wilderness had of the outward glory of the Lord at Mount Sinai when they saw it with bodily eyes — and no better than the idea that millions of the condemned will have of the outward glory of Christ at the day of judgment, when they will see with vivid clar-

ity a glory ten thousand times greater than anything anyone has ever imagined. The image of Christ that people form in their imaginations is not in its own nature any better than the idea Catholics form of Christ through the beautiful and moving images of Him in their churches — though the way of receiving the idea may not be as problematic. Nor are the affections they experience, if built primarily on such imaginings, any better than the affections stirred in simple people by the sight of those images, which are sometimes very great — especially when the images are made through priestly craft to appear to move, speak, or weep. The way in which people receive these imaginary ideas does not change the nature of the ideas themselves. However they are received, they remain external ideas — ideas of outward appearances — and so are not spiritual. Even if people received such external ideas by the direct power of God Himself on their minds, those ideas would not be spiritual — they would be no more than a common work of the Spirit of God. This is evident from the case of Balaam, on whose mind God Himself impressed a clear and vivid outward representation of Jesus Christ as the Star rising out of Jacob, when he 'heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance' (Numbers 24:16-17). And yet Balaam had no spiritual discovery of Christ whatsoever — that Daystar never spiritually rose in his heart, for he was only a natural man.

Just as these external ideas have nothing divine or spiritual in their nature, and nothing that natural people without any new principles are incapable of, so there is nothing in their nature requiring that peculiar, matchless exercise of God's glorious power that has been shown to be necessary for the production of true

grace. Nothing in them appears to be beyond the power of the devil. It is certainly not beyond Satan's power to suggest thoughts to people — otherwise he could not tempt them to sin. And if he can suggest thoughts and ideas at all, imaginary ideas — ideas of external things — are certainly not beyond his power, since they are the lowest kind of ideas. These ideas may be produced simply by impressions made on the body, by stimulating the animal spirits and affecting the brain. Abundant experience clearly shows that physical changes can produce imaginary or external ideas in the mind, as is often the case in high fever, depression, and similar conditions. These external ideas are as far below the more intellectual exercises of the soul as the body is below the soul in nobility.

Not only is there nothing in the nature of these external ideas or imaginings of outward appearances from which we could conclude they are beyond the devil's power, but it is also certain that the devil can produce such ideas and often has. The external ideas excited in the dreams and visions of the false prophets of old — who were under the influence of lying spirits — are often spoken of in Scripture, as in Deuteronomy 13:1, 1 Kings 22:22, Isaiah 28:7, Ezekiel 13:7, and Zechariah 13:4. And it was external ideas that Satan frequently excited in the minds of pagan priests, magicians, and sorcerers during their visions and trances. It was also an external idea that he excited in the mind of Jesus Christ Himself when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world with their glory — kingdoms not actually in view at the time.

If Satan or any created being has the power to impress the mind with outward representations, then no particular kind of outward representation can serve as evidence of divine power. Almighty power is not required to represent the shape of a human

being in the imagination any more than the shape of anything else. No greater power is needed to form one bodily shape or color in the brain than another. It does not take any more glorious power to form the image of a human body than the image of a chip of wood — even if it is a very beautiful human body with a warm smile, arms open, or blood flowing from hands, feet, and side. The same kind of power that can represent black or darkness to the imagination can also represent white and shining brightness. The skill that can accurately paint a straw or stick of wood on paper or canvas — only perhaps somewhat further developed — is sufficient to paint a human body in great beauty and royal majesty, a magnificent city paved with gold, blazing with light, and a glorious throne. It takes no more than the same kind of power to paint one of these as the other on the brain. The same kind of power that puts ink on paper can put gold leaf on it. So it is demonstrably clear that if it is within the devil's power to produce any kind of external representation in the imagination at all — which is beyond doubt to anyone who believes the devil exists and has dealings with humanity — then a created power can extend to every kind of external appearance and idea in the mind.

From this it again clearly appears that none of these things have anything in them that is spiritual, supernatural, and divine in the sense in which all truly gracious experiences have been shown to have. And although external ideas do ordinarily, to some degree, accompany spiritual experiences due to the way human beings are made, these ideas are no part of the spiritual experience itself — any more than the movement of blood and the beating of the pulse that accompany experiences are part of the spiritual experience. Undoubtedly, because of human weakness in the present state —

and especially the delicate constitution of some people — very strong gracious affections can and do stimulate vivid impressions in the imagination. Yet it is equally certain that when affections are founded on imaginations — as is often the case — those affections are merely natural and ordinary, because they are built on a foundation that is not spiritual. They are therefore entirely different from gracious affections, which, as has been proved, always arise from spiritual and divine operations.

These imaginations very often raise the natural emotions of people to an extremely high pitch. No wonder — since those who have them are ignorantly but utterly convinced that these are divine manifestations that the Almighty is immediately making to their souls, giving them, in an extraordinary way, evidence of His high and special favor.

Again, it is evident from what has been observed and proved about the way gracious operations and effects in the heart are spiritual, supernatural, and divine, that the immediate suggesting of scripture words to the mind has nothing in it that is spiritual.

I have had occasion to touch on this already, and what has been said may be sufficient to establish it. But if the reader keeps in mind what has been said about the nature of spiritual influences and effects, it will be even more abundantly clear. For no one of ordinary understanding would claim that the bringing of words to the mind — whatever words they may be — is an effect of a nature impossible for a natural person in a state of nature to experience, or requiring any new divine sense in the soul, or so high, holy, and excellent in nature that no created power could possibly produce it.

Suggesting scripture words to the mind is simply exciting in the mind ideas of certain sounds or letters — it is just one way of producing ideas in the imagination, since sounds and letters are external things that are objects of the external senses of sight and hearing. Ideas of certain marks on paper — any of the letters of the alphabet in whatever arrangement — or of any vocal sounds are just as much external ideas as ideas of any other shape or sound whatsoever. By what has already been said about external ideas, it is clear they are nothing spiritual. When the Spirit of God suggests such letters or sounds to the mind, this is a common influence of that Spirit, not a special or gracious one. It follows from what has already been proved that affections which have this effect as their foundation are not spiritual or gracious affections. Let me be precise about what I am saying: when it is the immediate and extraordinary manner in which scripture words come to the mind that excites the affections and serves as their proper foundation, those affections are not spiritual. It can certainly be the case that people have gracious affections accompanying scripture texts that come to mind, and the Spirit of God may use those texts to stir them, when it is some spiritual sense, taste, or relish they have of the divine and excellent things contained in those scriptures that excites the affections — not the extraordinary and sudden way the words were brought to mind. They are affected by the instruction received from the words, and by the view of the glorious things of God or Christ that those words teach — not because the words came suddenly, as though someone had spoken them directly to them, leading them to conclude that God was speaking immediately to them. People are often powerfully moved on a very different basis: words from some great and lofty scripture promise come suddenly to

mind, and they take those words as directed immediately by God to them — as though the words at that very moment came out of the mouth of God spoken personally to them. They treat this as God's voice immediately revealing their blessed condition and promising them great things. That is what elevates them. There is no new spiritual understanding of the scripture — no new spiritual vision of the glorious things that passage teaches — that precedes and grounds their emotion. The only new understanding they have, or think they have, as the basis of their affection, is this: that the words were spoken to them, because they came so suddenly and remarkably. So this affection is built entirely on sand — on a conclusion for which they have no proper basis. As has been shown, the sudden arrival of words in the mind is no evidence that God brought them to the mind in that way. And even if God did bring the words to mind, and they somehow knew it for certain, that would not be spiritual knowledge — it could occur without any spiritual sense whatsoever. A person might know that the words God sent were indeed from God and yet have no spiritual knowledge. So the affections built on the notion that scripture texts are sent immediately from God have no spiritual foundation and are empty and deceptive. When persons whose affections have been raised this way are asked whether they have any new sense of the excellence of the things contained in those scriptures, they will likely say yes without hesitation. But the only way that is true is this: having taken up the notion that the words were spoken immediately to them, they find them sweet — and take the things those scriptures say to them as wonderful and excellent. For example, suppose the words suddenly brought to mind were 'Do not be afraid — it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

Having confidently accepted the idea that those words were as it were spoken directly from heaven to them — as an immediate revelation that God is their Father and has given the kingdom to them — they are greatly moved by it, and the words seem sweet. They say the things contained in those words are excellent! But the reason the promise seems excellent to them is only that they believe it was made to them personally. All the sense of glory they find in it comes from self-love and from their imagined personal stake in the words. There was no prior view or sense of the holy and glorious nature of the kingdom of heaven, or of the spiritual glory of the God who gives it, or of His excellent grace in offering and giving it to sinful people of His own good pleasure — none of this preceded and grounded their supposed interest in these things, their being moved by them, or their hope of having a share in them. On the contrary, they first imagine they have an interest in the words, then are powerfully moved by that imagined interest, and then declare the things to be excellent. So the sudden and extraordinary way the scripture came to mind is plainly the first and real foundation of the whole experience — which is clear evidence of the sad delusion they are under.

The first comfort of many people — what they call their conversion — follows this pattern. After awakening and terror, some comforting and sweet promise comes suddenly and remarkably to their minds, and the manner of its coming leads them to conclude it has come from God personally to them. This becomes the very foundation of their faith, hope, and comfort. From this they take their first encouragement to trust in God and Christ, because they believe that God, by bringing that scripture text to mind, has already revealed that He loves them and has already promised them

eternal life. This is completely mistaken. Anyone with a basic knowledge of religious principles knows that it is God's pattern to reveal His love to people and their interest in the promises after they have believed — not before — because they must first believe before they have any share in the promises to be revealed. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of truth, not of falsehood. He does not bring scripture texts to people's minds to reveal to them that they have an interest in God's favor and promises when in fact they have none — having not yet believed. That would be the case if God's bringing scripture texts to a person's mind to reveal forgiven sins, or God's pleasure to give them the kingdom, or anything of that nature, preceded and formed the foundation of their first faith. No promise of the covenant of grace belongs to any person until he has first believed in Christ, for it is by faith alone that we come to have a share in Christ and in the promises of the new covenant made in Him. Therefore, whatever spirit applies the promises of that covenant to a person who has not yet believed — treating them as already his — must be a lying spirit. And faith that is first built on such an application of promises is built on a lie. God's pattern is not to bring comforting scripture texts to give people assurance of His love and that they will be happy before they have exercised a trusting, dependent faith. If the scripture that comes to mind is not strictly a promise but an invitation, and a person makes the sudden or unusual manner of that invitation's coming to mind the grounds for believing he is invited, that is not true faith either — because it is built on what is not the true basis of faith. True faith is not built on a precarious foundation. The determination that the words of a particular text were, by God's immediate power, brought to mind at a particular moment as though

spoken and directed by God personally, because they came in such-and-such a manner — that is entirely an uncertain and shaky determination, as has been shown. It is therefore a false and sandy foundation for faith, and the faith built on it is accordingly false. The only certain foundation for a person's belief that he is invited to share in the blessings of the gospel is this: the Word of God declares that persons with such qualifications as he has are invited, and God who declares it is true and cannot lie. If a sinner is once convinced of God's truthfulness and that the scriptures are His word, he will need nothing more to convince him he is invited. Scripture is filled with invitations to sinners — to the chief of sinners — to come and receive the benefits of the gospel. He will not need God to speak to him again — what God has already spoken will be enough.

Just as the first comfort and affections of many people at the time of their supposed conversion are built on such grounds as these, so are their joys, hopes, and other affections from time to time afterward. They frequently have particular scripture words, sweet declarations and promises, come to mind, which because of the manner of their arrival they think are immediately sent from God to them at that moment. They look upon this as their warrant to claim those words as their own, and they make the manner of their coming the main basis for appropriating them to themselves, for the comfort they take in them, and for the confidence they derive from them. They imagine a kind of ongoing conversation with God — that God from time to time is, as it were, speaking directly to them, satisfying their doubts, testifying His love, promising them support and provision and blessing in particular situations, and revealing clearly their interest in eternal blessings. By this they

are frequently elevated, experiencing sudden and turbulent kinds of joy mixed with strong confidence and a high opinion of themselves. But the real basis of these joys and this confidence is not anything contained in or taught by those scriptures as they stand in the Bible, but the manner in which those words came to them — which is clear evidence of their delusion. No particular promise in the Word of God belongs to the saint any more than all the promises of the covenant of grace belong to him and are spoken to him. It is true that some of those promises may be more specifically suited to his circumstances than others, and God by His Spirit may enable him to understand some better than others and to have a deeper sense of the preciousness, glory, and beauty of the blessings they contain.

But some may be ready to ask: Is there no such thing as a particular, personal application of scripture promises by the Spirit of God? There is certainly such a thing as a spiritual and personal application of the truths and promises of scripture to the souls of people. But it is also certain that the nature of it is entirely misunderstood by many people, to the great harm of their own souls and to the enormous advantage it gives Satan against them, against the cause of religion, and against the church of God. The spiritual application of a scripture promise does not consist in its being immediately suggested to the mind by some unseen agent, brought forcefully into the thoughts with the strong sense that it is particularly spoken and directed to this person at this moment. There is nothing in this effect that bears the mark of God's hand, as events have proved in many disastrous instances. It is a false imitation of a spiritual application of scripture. There is nothing in the nature of this effect at all beyond the power of the devil when God permits

him to act, for there is nothing in the nature of the effect that is spiritual or that implies any vital communication from God. A truly spiritual application of the Word of God is of a vastly higher nature — as far above the devil's power as applying the Word to a dead corpse in such a way as to raise it to life, or to a stone in such a way as to transform it into an angel. A spiritual application of the Word of God consists in applying it to the heart through spiritually enlightening and sanctifying influences. A spiritual application of an invitation or offer of the gospel consists in giving the soul a spiritual sense and relish of the holy and divine blessings offered, and also of the sweet and wonderful grace of the One who offers them, and of His holy excellence and faithfulness in fulfilling what He offers, and of His glorious sufficiency to do so — thereby leading and drawing the heart to embrace the offer, and thus giving the person evidence of his right to what is offered. Similarly, a truly spiritual application of scripture promises for the comfort of the saints consists in enlightening their minds to see the holy excellence and sweetness of the blessings promised, and also the holy excellence of the Promiser, His faithfulness and sufficiency — thereby drawing their hearts to embrace both the Promiser and the thing promised — and by this means producing the living exercise of grace, enabling them to see their grace and thus their right to the promise. An application that does not consist in this divine enlightening of the mind, but only in words being pressed into the thoughts as if immediately then spoken, making people believe on no other basis that the promise is theirs — such an application is a blind application, and belongs to the spirit of darkness, not of light.

When people have their affections raised in this manner, those affections are not really raised by the Word of God. Scripture is not their actual foundation. It is not anything contained in the scripture texts that come to mind that raises their affections. What actually raises them is the strange manner in which the words were brought to mind, and a conclusion they draw from that — a proposition that is in fact not contained in that scripture or in any other: that his sins are forgiven, or that the Father's good pleasure is to give him the kingdom, or something similar. The Bible does contain propositions declaring that persons with such-and-such qualifications are forgiven and beloved by God. But the Bible contains no propositions declaring that such-and-such particular individuals — independent of any prior knowledge of their qualifications — are forgiven and beloved by God. So when any person is comforted and moved by such a proposition, it is by a different word entirely — a newly invented word, not any word of God found in the Bible. By this means many people are deceived and moved by what is empty.

Again, it is plainly clear from what has been demonstrated that no revelation of secret facts through immediate suggestion is anything spiritual and divine in the sense in which gracious effects and operations are so.

By 'secret facts' I mean things that have happened, are happening, or will happen, which are secret in the sense that they do not appear to the senses, are not known by reasoning or any evidence to reason, and are not knowable in any other way than by a revelation through the immediate suggestion of ideas about them to the mind. For example: suppose it were revealed to me that next year this country would be invaded by a fleet from France, or that cer-

tain people would then be converted, or that I myself would be converted — not by enabling me to reason these things out from anything presently visible in providence, but by immediately impressing on my mind, in an extraordinary way, the sense or idea of these facts, with a strong impression not of my own making that these things would come to pass. Or suppose it were revealed to me that on this very day a battle is being fought between the armies of certain powers in Europe; or that a certain European prince was converted today, or is now in a converted state having been converted earlier; or that one of my neighbors is converted; or that I myself am converted — not by having any other evidence from which I could reason to these conclusions, but by an immediate extraordinary suggestion or impression of these ideas on my mind. This is a revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion, just as much as if the facts were future. Whether the facts are past, present, or future makes no difference, as long as they are hidden from my senses and reason, are not spoken of in scripture, and are not known to me by any other means than immediate suggestion. If it is revealed to me that a revolution has occurred today in the Ottoman Empire, that is the very same kind of revelation as if it had been revealed to me that such a revolution would occur there a year from today — for though one is present and the other future, both are equally hidden from me except by immediate revelation. When Samuel told Saul that the donkeys he had gone to find had been found, and that his father had stopped worrying about the donkeys and was now anxious about him, this was the same kind of revelation as that by which Samuel told Saul that on the plain of Tabor three men going up to God at Bethel would meet him (1 Samuel 10:2-3) — though one event was future and the other was

not. Similarly, when Elisha told the king of Israel the words that the king of Syria spoke in his bedroom, it was the same kind of revelation as that by which he predicted many future events.

It is clear that this revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion has nothing of the nature of a spiritual and divine operation in the sense already described. There is nothing in the nature of the perceptions or ideas themselves that are produced in the mind that is divinely excellent and thus far above all the ideas of natural people, even though the manner of producing those ideas may be extraordinary. In things that are spiritual, as has been shown, not only the manner of producing the effect but the effect itself is divine — vastly above anything that can exist in an unsanctified mind. Simply having an idea of facts — setting aside the manner in which those ideas were produced — is nothing beyond what the minds of wicked people are capable of without any goodness in them. All wicked people either have or will have knowledge of the truth of the greatest and most important facts that have been, are, or will be.

As for the extraordinary manner of producing ideas or perceptions of facts by immediate suggestion — there is nothing in this that the minds of natural people while still in a state of nature are not capable of, as is evident in the case of Balaam and others in scripture. Therefore it appears that nothing about this immediate suggestion of secret facts is spiritual in the sense in which gracious operations have been proved to be spiritual. If there is nothing in the ideas themselves that is holy and divine — nothing that cannot be in an unsanctified mind — then God can place them in the mind by His immediate power without sanctifying it. Just as there is nothing in the idea of a rainbow that is of a holy and divine nature

— nothing to prevent an unsanctified mind from receiving that idea — so God, when He pleases, may immediately and in an extraordinary manner produce that idea in an unsanctified mind. So also, as there is nothing in the idea or knowledge that certain particular people are forgiven and accepted by God and have a title to heaven that is beyond what unsanctified minds can have — and will have regarding many people at the day of judgment — God can if He pleases extraordinarily and immediately suggest this to and impress it on an unsanctified mind right now. There is no principle lacking in an unsanctified mind to make it incapable of such a suggestion or impression, nor is there anything in it to exclude or necessarily prevent such a suggestion.

If these suggestions of secret facts are accompanied by scripture words that also come to mind immediately and extraordinarily, about other facts that seem somewhat similar, that does not make the operation spiritual and divine. The suggestion of scripture words is no more divine than the suggestion of the facts themselves, as has just been demonstrated. Two effects that are neither of them spiritual cannot together make up one combined effect that is spiritual.

It follows from all that has been shown and repeated that affections which are properly founded on such immediate suggestions, or supposed suggestions, of secret facts are not gracious affections. It is possible that such suggestions may be the occasion or even a contributing cause of gracious affections — just as a mistake or a delusion may sometimes be — but they are never the proper foundation of gracious affections. For gracious affections, as has been shown, are all the effects of an influence and operation that is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. But many people have strong and

elevated affections that have precisely these kinds of suggestions or revelations as their very foundation, looking upon them as spiritual discoveries — which is a serious delusion — and it is truly this delusion that is the spring from which their affections flow.

Here it is appropriate to observe that what many people call the witness of the Spirit — their assurance that they are children of God — has nothing in it that is spiritual and divine, and consequently the affections built upon it are empty and deceptive. What they call the witness of the Spirit is nothing more than an immediate suggestion and impression of a fact otherwise secret: that they are converted, made children of God, their sins pardoned, and they have a title to heaven. This kind of knowledge — knowing that a certain person is converted, delivered from hell, and entitled to heaven — is not in itself a divine kind of knowledge. This type of fact does not require any higher or more divine kind of suggestion to impress it on the mind than the facts God impressed on Balaam's mind. It requires no higher kind of idea or sensation for a person to have the impression of his own conversion than to have the impression of his neighbor's conversion in the same way. God, if He pleased, could impress the knowledge of the fact that He had forgiven a neighbor's sins and given that neighbor a title to heaven just as well as any other fact, without communicating His holiness at all. The excellence and importance of the fact do not in any way make a natural person's mind incapable of receiving an immediate suggestion and impression of it. Balaam had facts as excellent, important, and glorious as this impressed on his mind without any gracious influence — including the coming of Christ, the establishment of His glorious kingdom, and the blessedness of spiritual Israel in His special favor and their happiness in life and death.

Abimelech king of the Philistines had God's special favor to a particular person — Abraham — revealed to him (Genesis 20:6-7). God also seems to have revealed His special favor to Jacob to Laban (Genesis 31:24 and Psalm 125:15). If a truly good person were to receive an immediate revelation or suggestion from God in the same manner, concerning God's favor to his neighbor or to himself, it would be no higher kind of influence — no more than a common influence of God's Spirit, as is the gift of prophecy and all revelation by immediate suggestion (see 1 Corinthians 13:2). It is true that it is not possible for a natural person to receive from the Spirit of God the individual suggestion that he is converted, because it is not true. But that limitation arises not from the nature of the person — as if the kind of influence that suggests such excellent facts is too high for him to receive — but purely from the nature of the fact to be suggested. The influence that immediately suggests this fact, when it is true, is of no different kind from that which immediately suggests other true facts. So the kind and nature of the influence is not above what natural people share in common with the godly.

But it is a low and base notion of the witness of the Spirit given to God's dear children to suppose that there is nothing in the kind and nature of that influence of the Spirit — by which He imparts this high and glorious benefit — that is not equally common to natural people, or available to people who are entirely unsanctified and children of hell. Such a view implies that the benefit or gift itself has nothing of the holy nature of the Spirit of God in it, nothing of a vital communication of that Spirit. This notion greatly degrades the high and supremely exalted kind of influence and operation of the Spirit that is present in the true witness of the Spirit.

What Romans 8:16 calls 'the witness of the Spirit' is elsewhere in the New Testament called 'the seal of the Spirit' (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30) — an image drawn from the seal of princes attached to the documents by which they elevated their subjects to some high honor, dignity, or special privilege in the kingdom, as a sign of their special favor. This image indicates that the seal of the Spirit of the King of kings, in sealing His favorites, is far from being of a common kind. There is no effect of God's Spirit whatsoever that is more divine in its nature — nothing more holy, more unique, more beyond imitation, and more distinguishing of its recipients. Just as nothing is more royal than the royal seal, nothing more sacred and more distinctively belonging to a prince, more uniquely marking what comes from him and belongs to him — since the entire purpose of the seal is to be the most peculiar stamp and confirmation of royal authority and the supreme mark of distinction — so the seal of the great King of heaven and earth, stamped on the heart, must be something high and holy in its own nature, some excellent communication from the infinite fountain of divine beauty and glory. It cannot be merely the disclosure of a secret fact by revelation or suggestion — that kind of Spirit's influence is something even the children of the devil have often been the subjects of. The seal of the Spirit is a kind of effect of the Spirit of God on the heart that natural people, while remaining natural, are so far from being capable of receiving that they cannot have any notion or idea of it at all, as Revelation 2:17 indicates: 'To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' There is every reason to be-

lieve that what is spoken of here is the same mark, evidence, and blessed token of special favor that is elsewhere called the seal of the Spirit.

What has misled many in their understanding of this influence of the Spirit of God is the word 'witness' — its being called 'the witness of the Spirit.' From this they have taken it to be not any effect or work of the Spirit on the heart providing evidence from which people may conclude they are children of God, but an inward secret suggestion — as though God were inwardly speaking to the person and telling him he is a child of God by a kind of secret voice or impression. They have not noticed the sense in which the word 'witness' or 'testimony' is often used in the New Testament, where such terms frequently signify not merely making a declaration or assertion that something is true, but presenting evidence from which a thing may be argued and proved to be true. For example, Hebrews 2:4 says God 'bore witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit.' These miracles are called God's witness not because they are in the nature of assertions, but because they are evidences and proofs. So Acts 14:3 speaks of the Lord bearing witness to the word of His grace by granting signs and wonders to be done. John 6:36 says, 'The works that the Father has given Me to accomplish — the very works that I do — testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.' And John 10:25: 'The works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.' The water and blood are said to bear witness in 1 John 5:8 — not because they spoke or asserted anything, but because they were proofs and evidences. God's works of providence in sending rain and fruitful seasons are spoken of as witnesses of God's existence and goodness — that is, they are evidences of these things.

When Scripture speaks of the seal of the Spirit, the expression properly denotes not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit that is left as a divine mark on the soul — an evidence by which God's children may be known. The seals of princes were the distinguishing marks of those princes. So God's seal is spoken of as God's mark in Revelation 7:3: 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads,' together with Ezekiel 9:4: 'Put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed.' When God sets His seal on a person's heart by His Spirit, some holy stamp — some image — is impressed and left on the heart by the Spirit, as a seal leaves its impression on wax. This holy stamp or impressed image, presenting clear evidence to the conscience that the one who bears it is a child of God, is precisely what Scripture calls the seal of the Spirit and the witness or evidence of the Spirit. The image the Spirit stamps on God's children's hearts is His own image — and this is the evidence by which they are known as God's children: they bear the image of their Father stamped on their hearts by the Spirit of adoption. Seals anciently bore two things engraved on them: the image and the name of the person whose seal it was. So when Christ says to His beloved in Song of Solomon 8, 'Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm,' He is essentially saying: let my name and image remain impressed there. The seals of princes typically bore their image, so that whatever they sealed bore their likeness. It was the custom of ancient rulers to have their image engraved on jewels and precious stones, and the image of the Roman emperor engraved on a precious stone was used as the imperial seal in Christ's and the apostles' time. The saints are

the jewels of Jesus Christ, the great Sovereign who holds dominion over the universe, and these jewels have His image stamped upon them by His royal signet, the Holy Spirit. This is undoubtedly what Scripture means by the seal of the Spirit — especially when it is stamped in so clear and evident a manner that it is plain to the eye of conscience, which is what Scripture calls the full assurance of the Spirit. This is truly an effect that is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. It is holy in its very nature, being a communication of the divine nature and beauty. The kind of influence of the Spirit that produces and leaves this stamp on the heart is such that no natural person can be the subject of anything of the same nature. This is the highest kind of witness of the Spirit that the soul can possibly receive. If there were such a thing as a witness of the Spirit by immediate suggestion or revelation, this would be vastly more noble and excellent — as far above it as heaven is above earth. The devil cannot imitate this. As for an inward suggestion of the Spirit of God by a kind of secret voice speaking and immediately asserting and revealing a fact, Satan can produce something a thousand times more like that than he can produce anything resembling this holy and divine effect of the Spirit of God.

Another thing that fully proves the seal of the Spirit is not a revelation of any fact by immediate suggestion, but is grace itself in the soul, is that the seal of the Spirit is called the earnest of the Spirit in scripture. It is very plain that the seal of the Spirit and the earnest of the Spirit are the same thing, from 2 Corinthians 1:22: 'Who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.' And Ephesians 1:13-14: 'In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.' Now an earnest is a portion of the agreed sum paid in advance as a token of the whole, to be paid in full in due time — a part of the promised inheritance granted now as a token of full possession of the whole to come. Surely that communication of the Spirit of God which is of the nature of eternal glory is the highest and most excellent kind of communication — something that in its own nature is spiritual, holy, and divine, and far from anything common. It is therefore far above anything in the nature of inspiration or the revelation of hidden facts by the suggestion of the Spirit of God, which many natural people have received. What is the earnest and beginning of glory but grace itself — especially in its more lively and clear exercises? It is not prophecy, tongues, or knowledge, but that more excellent and divine thing — the love that never fails — which is a foretaste and beginning of the light, sweetness, and blessedness of heaven, that world of love. Grace is the seed of glory and the dawning of glory in the heart, and therefore grace is the earnest of the future inheritance. What is the beginning or earnest of eternal life in the soul but spiritual life? And what is spiritual life but grace? The inheritance Christ purchased for the elect is the Spirit of God — not in extraordinary gifts, but in His vital indwelling in the heart, expressing and communicating Himself there in His own proper, holy, and divine nature. This is the sum total of the inheritance Christ purchased for the elect. In the work of our redemption, the Father provides the Savior and is the One from whom the purchase is made; the Son is the Purchaser and the price; and the Holy Spirit is the great blessing and inheritance purchased, as indicated in Galatians 3:13-14. Therefore the Spirit is of-

ten spoken of as the sum of the blessings promised in the gospel (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4 and 2:38-39, Galatians 3:14, Ephesians 1:13). This inheritance was the great legacy Christ left to His disciples and His church in His final discourse — John 14, 15, and 16. This is the sum of the blessings of eternal life that will be given in heaven (compare John 7:37-39 and 4:14 with Revelation 21:6 and 22:1, 17). It is through the vital communications and indwelling of the Spirit that the saints have all their light, life, holiness, beauty, and joy in heaven. And it is through the vital communications and indwelling of that same Spirit that the saints have all their light, life, holiness, beauty, and comfort on earth — only communicated in lesser measure. This vital indwelling of the Spirit in the saints, in this lesser measure and small beginning, is the earnest of the Spirit, the earnest of the future inheritance, and the first fruits of the Spirit, as the apostle calls it in Romans 8:23 — where by 'the first fruits of the Spirit' the apostle undoubtedly means the same vital, gracious principle he speaks of throughout the preceding part of that chapter, which he calls Spirit and sets in contrast to flesh or corruption. Therefore this earnest of the Spirit and first fruits of the Spirit — which has been shown to be the same as the seal of the Spirit — is the vital, gracious, sanctifying communication and influence of the Spirit, and not any immediate suggestion or revelation of facts by the Spirit.

The apostle, when he speaks in Romans 8:16 of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, sufficiently explains himself if his words are carefully attended to. What he expresses there is connected to the two preceding verses as a consequence of what he had said, as any reader can see. The three verses together read: 'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these

are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.' Taken together, the apostle's words plainly show that what he has in mind when he speaks of the Spirit giving us witness or evidence that we are God's children is the Spirit's dwelling in us and leading us as a spirit of adoption — a spirit of a child — inclining us to relate to God as to a Father. This is the witness or evidence the apostle speaks of that we are children: that we have the spirit of children, the spirit of adoption. And what is that but the spirit of love? The apostle speaks of two kinds of spirits: the spirit of a slave — the spirit of bondage — which is fear; and the spirit of a child — the spirit of adoption — which is love. The apostle says we have not received the spirit of bondage, the servile spirit of fear, but the more noble and genuine spirit of children — a spirit of love — which naturally moves us to go to God as children go to a father and to relate to God as children. This is the evidence, the witness, which the Spirit of God gives us that we are children. This is the plain meaning of the apostle. He is undoubtedly speaking here of the very same way of casting out doubt and fear and the spirit of bondage that the apostle John speaks of in 1 John 4:18 — namely, by the prevailing of love, the spirit of a child. The spirit of bondage works through fear — the slave fears the rod — but love cries 'Abba, Father'; it moves us to go to God and relate to Him as children, and it gives us clear evidence of our union with God as His children, thus casting out fear. So it appears that the witness of the Spirit the apostle speaks of is far from being any whisper, immediate suggestion, or revelation; it is that gracious and holy effect of the Spirit of God in

the hearts of the saints — the disposition and spirit of children — appearing in sweet, childlike love toward God, which casts out the fearful spirit of a slave.

The same thing is evident from the whole context. It is plain that the apostle speaks of the Spirit throughout the passage as dwelling in the hearts of the saints as a gracious principle set in opposition to the flesh or corruption. He does so in the verse that immediately introduces the passage under consideration, verse 13: 'For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.'

Beyond doubt, the apostle has in view especially the spirit of grace — the spirit of love, the spirit of a child — in its more lively exercise. For it is only perfect love, or strong love, that so witnesses and evidences that we are children as to cast out fear and completely deliver from the spirit of bondage. The strong and lively exercise of a spirit of childlike, evangelical, humble love toward God gives clear evidence of the soul's relationship to God as His child, and this directly and powerfully satisfies the soul. And though it is far from the truth that the soul in this case judges only by an immediate witness without any sign or evidence — for it judges and is assured by the greatest sign and clearest evidence — yet in this case the saint has no need of many signs or any lengthy reasoning about them. The saint's sight of his relational union with God and his standing in God's favor is not without a medium, because he sees it through the medium of his love. Yet his sight of the union of his heart to God is immediate — love, the bond of union, is seen directly and intuitively. The saint sees and feels plainly the union between his soul and God; it is so strong and vivid that he cannot

doubt it. From this he is assured he is a child. How can he doubt whether he stands in a childlike relationship to God when he plainly sees a childlike union between God and his soul, and therefore boldly — naturally and necessarily, as it were — cries 'Abba, Father'?

When the apostle says the Spirit bears witness 'with our spirit,' by 'our spirit' he means our conscience, which is called the spirit of a person in Proverbs 20:27: 'The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being.' We read elsewhere of the witness of this spirit of ours in 2 Corinthians 1:12: 'For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience.' And 1 John 3:19-21: 'We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.' When the apostle Paul speaks of the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit, he is not describing two spirits as two separate, parallel, independent witnesses. Rather, it is through one that we receive the witness of the other: the Spirit of God gives the evidence by infusing and pouring out the love of God — the spirit of a child — in the heart, and our spirit, our conscience, receives and declares this evidence for our encouragement.

The false and deceptive notion of the witness of the Spirit — that it is a kind of inward voice, suggestion, or declaration from God to a person that he is beloved, pardoned, elected, or the like, sometimes accompanied by a scripture text and sometimes without — has caused immense harm. Many false and empty, though

very intense, affections have arisen from it. It is to be feared that multitudes of souls have been eternally undone by it. I have therefore dwelt at greater length on this point.

But I now proceed to a second characteristic of gracious affections.

Second distinguishing sign: the first and primary object of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and beautiful nature of divine things as they are in themselves — not any conceived relationship they bear to the self or to self-interest.

I say the supremely excellent nature of divine things is the first, primary, and original objective foundation of the spiritual affections of true saints — I do not suppose that all relationship between divine things and the saint's own particular interest is wholly excluded from any influence in their gracious affections. This relationship may have, and indeed does have, a secondary and consequential influence in affections that are truly holy and spiritual, as I will show shortly.

It was noted earlier that love is, as it were, the fountain of all affections — and in particular that Christian love is the fountain of all gracious affections. Now the divine excellence and glory of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Word of God, and of the works and ways of God, is the primary reason a true saint loves these things. The foundation of that love is not any supposed interest he has in them, any benefit he has received or expects to receive from them, or any imagined relationship they bear to his own advantage — such that self-love could properly be called the first and real foundation of his love for them.

Some say that all love arises from self-love, and that it is impossible in the nature of things for any person to love God or any other being without self-love being the foundation of it. I believe this is said without sufficient reflection. They argue that whoever loves God and therefore desires His glory and the enjoyment of Him is desiring those things as his own happiness — God's glory and the beholding and enjoying of His perfections are things agreeable to him, tending to make him happy. He places his happiness in them and desires them as things that, if obtained, would fill him with delight and joy. Therefore, they say, it is from self-love — a desire for his own happiness — that he desires God to be glorified and desires to behold and enjoy His glorious perfections. But they should think a little further and ask how the man came to place his happiness in God's being glorified and in contemplating and enjoying God's perfections. No doubt, after God's glory and the beholding of His perfections have become so agreeable to him that he places his highest happiness in these things, he will then desire them as he desires his own happiness. But how did these things become so agreeable to him that he counts it his highest happiness to glorify God? Is not this the fruit of love? A person must first love God — must have his heart united to Him — before he will regard God's good as his own, and before he will desire the glorifying and enjoying of God as his happiness. It is not a strong argument that because, after a man's heart is united to God in love and as a fruit of that love he desires God's glory and enjoyment as his own happiness, therefore a desire for his own happiness must have been the cause and foundation of his love. That would be as strong as arguing that because a father begat a son, the son must have begotten the father. If after a man loves God and has his heart so united

to Him that he regards God as his chief good and God's good as his own, it follows as a consequence of this love that even self-love will lead him to desire the glorifying and enjoying of God. But it does not follow from this that self-love came before his love to God, or that his love to God was a consequence and fruit of self-love. Something else, entirely distinct from self-love, may have been the cause — namely, a change made in the views of his mind and the affections of his heart, by which he perceives a beauty, glory, and supreme goodness in God's nature as it is in itself. This may be what first draws his heart to God and unites him to God, prior to any consideration of his own interest or happiness — though after this, and as a fruit of it, he necessarily seeks his interest and happiness in God.

There is such a thing as a kind of love or affection that a person may have toward persons or things that does properly arise from self-love: a preconceived relation to himself, or some regard already shown by another toward him, or some benefit already received or expected — this is truly the first foundation of his love, and it is what his affection wholly arises from. It precedes any taste for or delight in the inherent nature and qualities of the beloved, considered as beautiful and admirable. When what first draws a person's goodwill toward another is seeing qualities and traits in that person that appear lovely in themselves — qualities that make the person worthy of esteem and goodwill — love arises in a very different way than when it first arises from some gift given by another, or from some imagined relationship, as when a judge favors a man who has bribed him, or a man loves someone because he regards that person as his child. When love toward another arises in the latter way, it truly and properly arises from self-love.

That kind of affection toward God or Jesus Christ which properly arises from self-love cannot be truly gracious and spiritual love, as is clear from what has already been said. Self-love is an entirely natural principle, present as fully in the hearts of devils as in angels. Nothing that is merely the product of it can therefore be supernatural and divine in the manner previously described. Christ plainly speaks of this kind of love as no different from the love of wicked people, in Luke 6:32: 'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.' Even the devil knew that a regard for God that was mercenary — existing only for benefits received or expected — is worthless in God's sight. Otherwise he would never have used such a slander against Job before God, as in Job 1:9-10: 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house?' Nor would God have implicitly acknowledged the objection to be valid — in the event the accusation were true — by allowing the matter to be tested: permitting Job to be dealt with in such a way that it would become evident whether his regard for God was mercenary or not, and making the proof of the sincerity and goodness of his regard depend on the outcome.

It is unreasonable to think otherwise than that the first foundation of true love to God is what makes Him in Himself lovely and worthy to be loved — the supreme loveliness of His nature. This is certainly what makes Him supremely beautiful. What chiefly makes any person or creature lovely is their excellence, and so what chiefly makes God lovely — and must undoubtedly be the chief ground of true love — is His excellence. God's nature, the divine nature, is infinitely excellent — it is infinite beauty, brightness, and glory itself. But how can affection for this excellent and

lovely nature be true love when it is not built on the foundation of His true loveliness? How can that be true love of beauty and brightness which does not love for beauty and brightness' sake? How can that be a true prizing of what is in itself infinitely worthy and precious that does not prize it for its own worthiness and preciousness? This infinite excellence of the divine nature as it is in itself is the true ground of all that is good in God in any respect. How can a person truly and rightly love God without loving Him for that excellence which is the foundation of everything in Him that is in any way good or desirable? Those whose affection to God is founded first on His usefulness to them have their affection starting from the wrong end. They regard God only at the outermost edge of the stream of divine goodness — where it touches them and reaches their own interest. They have no regard for that infinite glory of God's nature which is the original good, the true fountain of all good, the first fountain of all loveliness of every kind, and so the first foundation of all true love.

The natural principle of self-love can be the foundation of great affections toward God and Christ without any sight of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. There is a kind of gratitude that is a purely natural thing. Gratitude is one of the natural affections of the human soul, just as anger is. There is a gratitude that arises from self-love in much the same way anger does. Anger is an affection excited against another for something in that person that crosses self-love; gratitude is an affection toward another for loving us, for meeting our needs, or for something in that person that suits self-love. There may be a kind of gratitude without any true or proper love, just as there may be anger without any proper hatred — as parents may be angry with their children while at the

same time having strong and settled love for them. This gratitude is the principle Christ speaks of in Luke 6, when He says sinners love those who love them — and when He speaks of even the tax collectors, who were among the most worldly and dissolute people, in Matthew 5:46. This is the very principle that bribery works on in corrupt judges. It is a principle even animals exercise — a dog will love its master who is kind to it. We see in countless examples that mere human nature is sufficient to produce gratitude in people, moving their hearts with thankfulness for kindnesses received — sometimes even toward people they have an underlying hostility toward. Saul was twice deeply moved and even melted with gratitude toward David for sparing his life, and yet remained a settled enemy toward him. As people may be moved this way toward other people, so they may toward God — nothing prevents self-love from working the same way toward God as toward other people. Scripture gives us clear examples: the Israelites who sang God's praises at the Red Sea but soon forgot His works; Naaman the Syrian, who was so moved by the miraculous cure of his leprosy that his heart was engaged from that point forward to worship God alone — except when it would cost him his earthly interests; and Nebuchadnezzar, who was greatly moved by God's goodness to him in restoring his reason and kingdom after his time of living among the beasts.

Gratitude being a natural principle, it makes ingratitude all the more vile and wicked — because it shows a dreadful strength of wickedness when wickedness overpowers and suppresses even the better principles of human nature. It is mentioned as evidence of the extreme wickedness of many of the pagans that they were 'without natural affection' (Romans 1:31). But the fact that lack of

gratitude and natural affection are signs of extreme vice does not mean that all gratitude and natural affection have the nature of virtue or saving grace.

Through the exercise of a merely natural gratitude, self-love may be the foundation of a kind of love to God in several ways. A kind of love may arise from a false notion of God — one absorbed from education or developed along the way — as if He were only goodness and mercy with no avenging justice, or as if His exercises of goodness were necessary rather than free and sovereign, or as if His goodness depended on what is in people and were somehow constrained by them. On such grounds, people may love a god of their own imagination while being far from loving the God who reigns in heaven.

Self-love may also be the foundation of affection toward God when people have no real sense of their standing before Him and lack the conviction of conscience that would make them feel how dreadfully they have provoked God to anger. They have no sense of the gravity of sin against God, or of the infinite and terrible opposition of God's holy nature to it. Having formed in their minds a god who suits them, and thinking God is like themselves — someone who favors and approves of them — they may like Him quite well and feel a kind of love for Him, while being far from loving the true God. People's affections may also be greatly stirred toward God through self-love by some remarkable outward benefit received from God, as it was with Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Israelites at the Red Sea.

A very strong affection toward God may also often arise in people from an opinion of God's love and favor toward them as the first foundation of their love for Him. After awakening and distress

from fears of hell, they may suddenly arrive at the notion — through some impression on their imagination, or an immediate suggestion with or without scripture texts, or by some other means — that God loves them, has forgiven their sins, and made them His children. This becomes the first thing that causes their affections to flow toward God and Jesus Christ. Then, on this foundation, many things about God may appear lovely to them, and Christ may seem excellent. If such people are asked whether God appears lovely and beautiful in Himself, they would perhaps readily say yes. But if the matter is carefully examined, their good opinion of God was paid for before they formed it — it was purchased by the special and infinite benefits they imagined they had received from God. They allow God to be lovely in Himself only in this sense: that He has forgiven them, accepted them, loves them above most people in the world, has pledged to use all His infinite power and wisdom to advance and exalt them, and will do for them exactly as they would wish. Once they are settled in this conviction, it is easy to acknowledge God and Christ as lovely and glorious and to admire and praise them. It is easy for them to own that Christ is a lovely person, the best in the world, when they are already firmly persuaded that He — though Lord of the universe — is captivated with love for them, that His heart is wholly given to them, that He prizes them above most of their neighbors, loved them from eternity, died for them, and will make them reign with Him in eternal glory in heaven. When this is the condition of carnal people, their very lusts will make Him seem lovely: pride itself will bias them in favor of what they call Christ, because selfish, proud human nature naturally finds lovely whatever greatly advances its interests and feeds its ambition.

And as these people begin, so they continue. Their affections are stirred up from time to time, primarily on this foundation of self-love and a belief in God's love for them. Many have a false notion of communion with God — as though it were carried on through impulses, whispers, and external representations made immediately to their imagination. These things they often experience, and they take them as evidence of God's great love for them and proof of their exalted standing above other people. And so their affections are repeatedly set in motion.

But the exercises of true and holy love in the saints arise in a completely different way. They do not first see that God loves them and then see that He is lovely. Rather, they first see that God is lovely, that Christ is excellent and glorious, and their hearts are first captured by this vision. Their exercises of love typically begin here, arising primarily from these views — and then, as a result, they see God's love and great favor toward them. The saint's affections begin with God, and self-love plays only a consequential and secondary role in those affections. The false affections, by contrast, begin with self; acknowledgment of God's excellence and being moved by it is only a later and dependent result. In the true saint, God is the deepest foundation — love for the excellence of His nature is the foundation of all the affections that follow, in which self-love serves only as a servant. The hypocrite, by contrast, places himself at the bottom as the first foundation and builds God on top; even his acknowledgment of God's glory depends on his private interest.

Self-love may influence people not only to be affected by God's kindness to them personally, but also by God's kindness to them as members of a community. Just as the natural principle of self-love

— without any other principle — can make a person concerned for the interests of the nation to which he belongs, so the same natural principle can extend further — even to all of humanity. People might be affected by the benefits their fellow human beings receive compared to the inhabitants of other worlds, if such beings existed and we knew something of their condition. The same principle can cause people to be moved by the benefits humanity has received that fallen angels have not. From this principle, people may be greatly affected by the wonderful goodness of God to humanity — His great goodness in giving His Son to die for fallen humanity, the marvelous love of Christ in suffering so greatly for us, and the great glory that God has prepared in heaven for us. They see themselves as people who share in these benefits as members of this specially favored species of creature. The same natural gratitude that operates in response to personal benefits operates here as well.

But nothing that has been said implies that all gratitude to God is a merely natural thing, or that there is no such thing as a spiritual gratitude — a holy and divine affection. It implies only that there is a gratitude which is merely natural, and that when people have affections toward God only or primarily because of benefits received, those affections are only the exercise of natural gratitude. There is undoubtedly such a thing as gracious gratitude, which differs greatly from any gratitude natural people experience. It differs in the following ways:

First, true gratitude or thankfulness to God for His kindness to us arises from a prior foundation of love to God for what He is in Himself — whereas natural gratitude has no such antecedent foundation. The gracious stirrings of grateful affection to God for kind-

ness received always flow from a stock of love already established in the heart, built in the first place on other grounds — namely, God's own excellence. From this, the affections are disposed to flow outward on occasions of God's kindness. The saint has seen the glory of God, and his heart has been overcome and captured into a supreme love for God on that account. This makes his heart tender and easily affected by kindnesses received. If a person has no love to another, gratitude may still be stirred by some extraordinary kindness — as it was in Saul toward David. But this is not the same as the gratitude of someone whose heart was already possessed with high esteem and love for a dear friend — a person whose heart is thereby made tender toward that friend and affected with gratitude in a deeper and altogether different way. Self-love is not excluded from gracious gratitude — the saints love God for His kindness to them (Psalm 116:1: 'I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications'). But something else is included, and another love prepares the way and lays the foundation for these grateful affections.

Second, in gracious gratitude, people are affected by the attribute of God's goodness and free grace not only as it concerns them or affects their interest, but as a part of the glory and beauty of God's nature. The wonderful and matchless grace of God, manifested in the work of redemption and shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ, is infinitely glorious in itself and appears so to the angels — it is a great part of the moral perfection and beauty of God's nature. This grace would be glorious whether it were exercised toward us or not. The saint who exercises gracious thankfulness sees it to be so and delights in it as such — though his personal stake in it serves to more fully engage his mind and heighten

attention and affection. Self-love here assists as a servant, ministering to higher principles by drawing the mind into view and contemplation of God's goodness, engaging and fixing attention, and heightening joy and love. God's kindness to the saint is like a mirror that God sets before him, in which to behold the beauty of God's attribute of goodness. The exercises and displays of this attribute are, by this means, brought near and set directly before him. So in holy thankfulness to God, the saint's personal stake in God's goodness is not the first foundation of his being moved by it. That foundation was laid earlier in the stock of love already in the heart for God's excellence in Himself — a love that makes the heart tender and receptive to impressions of God's kindness. Nor is the saint's own interest or the benefits received the only or primary objective ground of the present exercises of affection. The primary ground is God's goodness as part of the beauty of His nature — though the display of that lovely attribute set directly before the saint's eyes in the exercise of it toward him is the special occasion that directs his attention to that beauty at that moment, and serves to fix attention and heighten affection.

Some may be inclined to object against all that has been said by pointing to 1 John 4:19 — 'We love Him, because He first loved us' — as if this meant that God's love to the true saints is the first foundation of their love to Him.

In answer to this I observe that the apostle's purpose in these words is to magnify God's love to us by showing that He loved us when we had no love for Him — as will be clear to anyone who compares this verse and the two following with verses 9, 10, and 11. The apostle proves that God loved us when we had no love for Him by arguing that God's love to the elect is the ground of their

love to Him. He does so in three ways. First, the saints' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them — it is the gift of that love. God gave them a spirit of love for Him because He loved them from eternity. In this respect God's love to His elect is the first foundation of their love to Him, as it is the foundation of their regeneration and of their entire redemption. Second, the exercises and demonstrations that God has made of His wonderful love to sinful people through Jesus Christ in the work of redemption are one of the chief ways God has manifested the glory of His moral perfection to both angels and people, and so these demonstrations are one of the main objective grounds of the love of both to God — consistent with what was said earlier. Third, God's love to a particular elect person, revealed through that person's conversion, is a great manifestation of God's moral perfection and glory to that person, and is a proper occasion for stirring up the love of holy gratitude, in keeping with what was said before. That the saints love God in these respects because He first loved them fully satisfies the purpose of the apostle's argument in that passage. Therefore no valid argument can be drawn from it against a spiritual and gracious love in the saints that arises primarily from the excellence of divine things as they are in themselves, and not from any conceived relation they bear to the saint's own interest.

As it is with the saints' love, so it is with their joy and spiritual delight and pleasure: the first foundation of it is not any consideration or awareness of their personal interest in divine things, but it consists primarily in the sweet enjoyment their minds have in viewing and contemplating the divine and holy beauty of those things as they are in themselves. This is indeed the very main difference between the joy of a hypocrite and the joy of a true saint.

The former rejoices in himself — self is the first foundation of his joy. The latter rejoices in God. The hypocrite's mind is pleased and delighted first with his own privilege and the happiness he believes he has attained or will attain. True saints have their minds first filled with inexpressible pleasure and delight by the sweet vision of the glorious and lovely nature of the things of God. This is the spring of all their delights and the finest part of all their pleasures — it is the joy within their joy. This sweet and ravishing delight they experience in viewing the beautiful nature of divine things is the foundation of the joy that comes afterward — the joy of knowing these things are theirs. Hypocrites experience their affections in the opposite order: they first rejoice and are exalted because they believe God has made so much of them, and then, on that basis, God seems in some way lovely to them.

The first foundation of the true saint's delight in God is God's own perfection. The first foundation of his delight in Christ is Christ's own beauty — He appears in Himself as the chief among ten thousand, altogether lovely. The way of salvation through Christ is a delightful way to the saint because of the sweet and admirable display of divine perfections it contains. The holy doctrines of the gospel — by which God is exalted and humanity brought low, holiness honored and promoted, sin greatly dishonored and discouraged, and free and sovereign love made manifest — are glorious doctrines in his eyes and sweet to his taste, prior to any thought of his own interest in them. The saints certainly rejoice in their interest in God and in the fact that Christ is theirs — and they have great reason to. But this is not the first spring of their joy. They first rejoice in God as glorious and excellent in Himself, and then secondarily in the fact that so glorious a God is

theirs. They first have their hearts filled with sweetness from the view of Christ's excellence, the excellence of His grace, and the beauty of the way of salvation through Him — and then they have a secondary joy that so excellent a Savior and such excellent grace are theirs. But what is the true saint's upper story is the hypocrite's foundation. When hypocrites hear of the wonderful things of the gospel — God's great love in sending His Son, Christ's dying love for sinners, the great things Christ has purchased and promised to the saints — and hear these things presented vividly and compellingly, they may hear with great pleasure and be lifted up. But if their joy is examined, it will be found to have no other foundation than this: they regard all these things as belonging to them, and all of it exalts them. They love to hear of Christ's great love distinguishing some so sharply from others, because self-love — even pride itself — makes them relish being set apart from others. It is no wonder that, in their confident belief in their own good spiritual standing, they feel good under such preaching and are supremely pleased to hear how greatly God and Christ esteem them. Their joy is therefore really a joy in themselves and not in God.

Because the joy of hypocrites is in themselves, it follows that in their moments of rejoicing and elevation they keep their eyes on themselves. Having received what they call spiritual discoveries or experiences, their minds are occupied with those experiences — they are absorbed in admiring their own experiences. What chiefly captures and elevates them is not the glory of God or the beauty of Christ, but the beauty of their experiences. They keep saying to themselves, 'What an excellent experience this is! What a great discovery! What wonderful things I have encountered!' So they put their experiences in the place of Christ, His beauty and fullness.

Instead of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, they rejoice in their admirable experiences. Instead of feeding and nourishing their souls on the view of something outside themselves — the inherent, sweet, refreshing loveliness of the things presented in the gospel — their eyes are off those things, or at best they view them sideways. The object that holds their contemplation is their experience, and they are feeding their souls and feasting a self-centered principle on their discoveries. They take more comfort in their discoveries than in Christ who is discovered — which is what it truly means to live on experiences and frames, as distinct from using experiences as signs they rely on as evidence of their good standing, which some call 'living on experiences.' And yet it is notable that some of those who do this are the most notorious for living on experiences in the true sense.

Hypocrites' affections very often follow this pattern: they are first greatly moved by some impression on their imagination, or some impulse they take to be an immediate suggestion or testimony from God of His love and their happiness and high privilege — with or without a scripture text. They are powerfully captured by this as a great discovery, and high affections arise from it. When their affections are raised, they then look at those high affections and call them great and wonderful experiences. They believe God is greatly pleased with those affections, and this moves them further — they are affected by their own affections. So their affections rise higher and higher until they are sometimes completely overwhelmed. Self-conceit and fierce zeal rise alongside it all, and the whole structure is built like a castle in the air on no foundation other than imagination, self-love, and pride.

As the thoughts of these people are, so is their talk — for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Just as in their intense affections they keep their eyes on the beauty of their experiences and the greatness of their attainments, so they talk much about themselves. The true saint, under great spiritual affection, overflows from a full heart with much talk about God, His glorious perfections and works, the beauty and loveliness of Christ, and the glorious things of the gospel. But hypocrites in their high affections talk more about the discovery than about the thing discovered. They are full of talk about the great things they have encountered, the wonderful discoveries they have had, how certain they are of God's love for them, how safe their condition is, and how they know they are going to heaven.

When a true saint is enjoying genuine discoveries of the sweet glory of God and Christ, his mind is too fully captured and engaged by what he sees outside himself to stop and examine himself and his own attainments. It would be a distraction and a loss he could not afford to take his eyes off the ravishing object of his contemplation in order to survey his own experience and spend time thinking about what a high attainment this is and what a fine story he now has to tell others. Nor does the pleasure and sweetness of his mind at that time arise mainly from considering the safety of his condition or anything he perceives about his own qualifications, experiences, or circumstances. It arises from the divine and supreme beauty of the object directly before him — outside himself — which sweetly engages and firmly holds his mind.

As the love and joy of hypocrites arise from self-love, so it is with their other affections — their sorrow for sin, their humiliation and submission, their religious desires and zeal. Everything is, as it

were, paid for in advance by God's having, in their imagination, so greatly gratified their self-love and their desires by making so much of them and exalting them so highly. It is easy for corrupt human nature, under the impression of already being among the highest favorites of heaven and having a God who protects and favors them in their sins, to love this imaginary God who suits them so well — to praise Him, submit to Him, and be fiercely zealous for Him. The high affections of many are entirely built on the assumption that they are eminent saints. If that opinion of themselves were taken away — if they thought of themselves as among the lower sort of saints, even while still believing they were genuine saints — their high affections would collapse. If they saw even a little of the sinfulness and vileness of their own hearts, and their spiritual deformity in the midst of their best duties and best affections, it would destroy their affections outright. Their affections are built on self, and therefore self-knowledge would destroy them. But truly gracious affections are built elsewhere — their foundation is outside the self, in God and Jesus Christ. Therefore a discovery of oneself, of one's own deformity and the weakness of one's experiences, though it may purify gracious affections, will not destroy them — in some respects it will even sweeten and deepen them.

Third distinguishing sign: affections that are truly holy are primarily founded on love for the moral excellence of divine things — or, to put it another way, a love for divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellence is the first beginning and spring of all holy affections.

For the sake of readers less familiar with technical terms, let me explain what I mean by the moral excellence of divine things.

The word 'moral' here is not to be understood in the common everyday sense in which people speak of morality and moral behavior — meaning outward conformity to the duties of the moral law, especially the duties of the second table of the Ten Commandments. Nor does it mean simply those seeming virtues that proceed from natural principles as opposed to virtues that are more inward, spiritual, and divine — such as the honesty, justice, generosity, good nature, and public spirit of many pagans, which are called moral virtues in distinction from the holy faith, love, humility, and heavenly-mindedness of true Christians. The word 'moral' is not being used in that sense here.

To understand what is meant, it must be observed that theologians commonly distinguish between moral good and evil and natural good and evil. By moral evil they mean the evil of sin — that which is against duty and contrary to what is right and ought to be. By natural evil they do not mean that which is properly opposed to duty, but that which is contrary to mere nature without any reference to a rule of duty. The evil of suffering is called natural evil — things like pain, torment, disgrace, and the like. These things are contrary to mere nature, unpleasant to the nature of both the bad and the good, hated by wicked people and demons as well as good people and angels. Natural defects are also called natural evils, as when a child is born with a severe disability or mental impairment. These are natural evils but not moral evils, because they do not have the nature of sin. On the other hand, just as moral evil means the evil of sin — what is contrary to what is right — so moral good means what is contrary to sin: the good in beings who have will and choice whereby, as free agents, they are and act as they ought, in ways that are most fitting, suitable, and lovely. Natural good

means a good entirely different in kind from holiness or virtue — that which perfects or suits nature considered by itself, apart from holy or unholy qualities, and without reference to any rule or measure of right and wrong.

Pleasure is a natural good; so is honor; so are strength, speculative knowledge, human learning, and practical wisdom. A distinction can be made between the natural good a person possesses and their moral good, and similarly between the natural and moral good of the angels in heaven. The great capacity of the angels' understanding, their great strength, and their honored position as the great ministers of God's kingdom — from which they are called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers — is the natural good they possess. But their perfect and glorious holiness and goodness, their pure and burning love to God, to the saints, and to one another, is their moral good. Theologians likewise distinguish between the natural and moral perfections of God. By God's moral perfections they mean those attributes which God exercises as a moral agent — the attributes whereby the heart and will of God are good, right, infinitely fitting and lovely: His righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness, or in one word, His holiness. By God's natural attributes or perfections they mean those attributes that consist — in our way of conceiving of God — not in His holiness or moral goodness, but in His greatness: His power, His knowledge by which He knows all things, His eternity from everlasting to everlasting, His omnipresence, and His awesome and majestic grandeur.

The moral excellence of an intelligent, voluntary being has its seat most directly in the heart or will. The intelligent being whose will is truly right and lovely is morally good or excellent.

When the moral excellence of an intelligent being is genuine and real — not merely outward or a pretense — it is holiness. Therefore holiness encompasses all the true moral excellence of intelligent beings. There is no true virtue apart from real holiness. Holiness encompasses all the true virtue of a good person: his love to God, his gracious love to fellow human beings, his justice, his charity, his compassionate mercies, his gracious meekness and gentleness — all other true Christian virtues belong to his holiness. So the holiness of God, in the broader sense in which the word is used commonly — if not universally — in Scripture, is the same as the moral excellence of the divine nature: His purity and beauty as a moral agent, encompassing all His moral perfections: His righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness. Just as in holy people their love and mercy belong to their holiness, so the kindness and mercy of God belong to His holiness. Holiness in humanity is simply the image of God's holiness. There are no more virtues in the image than exist in the original. Derived holiness has no more in it than the uncreated holiness that is its fountain. There is only grace for grace — grace in the image corresponding to grace in the original.

Just as there are two kinds of attributes in God — His moral attributes, summed up in His holiness, and His natural attributes of strength, knowledge, and so on, which constitute His greatness — so there is a twofold image of God in humanity. The moral or spiritual image is holiness — the image of God's moral excellence — and this image was lost at the fall. The natural image consists in human reason and understanding, natural ability, and dominion over creation, which is the image of God's natural attributes.

From what has been said, it is easy to understand what I mean when I say that a love for divine things for the beauty of their moral excellence is the beginning and spring of all holy affections. Under the previous heading it was already shown that the first objective ground of all holy affections is the supreme excellence of divine things as they are in themselves — in their own nature. I now go further and say more specifically that the kind of excellence of divine things which is the first objective ground of all holy affections is their moral excellence, or their holiness. Holy people, in the exercise of holy affections, love divine things primarily for their holiness. They love God first for the beauty of His holiness and moral perfection, as something supremely lovely in itself. This does not mean that the saints love God only for His holiness — all His attributes are beautiful and glorious in their eyes, and they delight in every divine perfection. The contemplation of God's infinite greatness, power, knowledge, and awesome majesty is pleasant to them. But their love to God for His holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their love. This is where true love to God begins. All other holy love to divine things flows from here. This is the most essential and distinguishing feature of a holy love to God with respect to its foundation. Love to God for the beauty of His moral attributes leads to and necessarily produces delight in God for all His attributes, for His moral attributes cannot exist without His natural attributes: infinite holiness requires infinite wisdom and infinite capacity and greatness, and all of God's attributes imply one another.

The true beauty and loveliness of all intelligent beings consists primarily and most essentially in their moral excellence or holiness. This is where the loveliness of the angels consists — without

it, with all their natural perfections of strength and knowledge, they would be no more lovely than demons. Moral excellence alone is, in itself and on its own account, the excellence of intelligent beings. It is moral excellence that gives beauty to their natural perfections and qualities — or rather, moral excellence is the beauty of those natural perfections. Moral excellence is the excellence of natural excellences. Natural qualities are excellent or not depending on whether they are joined with moral excellence. Strength and knowledge do not make any being lovely without holiness — on the contrary, they make such a being more hateful, though they do make a being more lovely when joined with holiness. The elect angels are the more glorious for their strength and knowledge because those natural perfections are sanctified by their moral perfection. But though the demons are very powerful and of great natural understanding, they are not the more lovely for it. They are more terrifying, but not more beautiful — on the contrary, they are the more hateful. The holiness of an intelligent creature is the beauty of all its natural perfections. The same is true of God, as we conceive of Him. Holiness is, in a special sense, the beauty of the divine nature. This is why we often read of the beauty of holiness (Psalm 29:2, 96:9, 110:3). It is holiness that makes all His other attributes glorious and lovely. It is the glory of God's wisdom that it is a holy wisdom and not a wicked cunning. It is the fact that it is a holy majesty that makes His majesty lovely rather than merely dreadful and terrifying. It is the glory of God's immutability that it is a holy immutability and not a rigid stubbornness in wickedness.

Therefore a sight of God's loveliness must necessarily begin here. True love to God must begin with delight in His holiness and not with delight in any other attribute — for no other attribute is

truly lovely without this, and all other attributes are lovely only as they derive their loveliness from this. Therefore it is impossible for other attributes to appear in their true loveliness until holiness is seen, and impossible for any perfection of the divine nature to be truly loved until holiness is loved. If the true loveliness of all God's perfections arises from the loveliness of His holiness, then true love for all His perfections arises from love for His holiness. Those who do not see the glory of God's holiness cannot see anything of the true glory of His mercy and grace. They see nothing of those attributes as an excellence of God's nature as it is in itself — though they may be moved by those attributes and love them insofar as they affect their own interest. For those attributes are no part of the excellence of God's nature in itself except as they are included in His holiness more broadly understood, or as they are part of His moral perfection.

Just as the beauty of the divine nature consists primarily in God's holiness, so does the beauty of all divine things. The beauty of the saints consists in their being holy — the moral image of God in them is both their beauty and their holiness. The beauty and brightness of the angels of heaven consists in their being holy angels, not demons (Daniel 4:13, 17, 23; Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; Acts 10:22; Revelation 14:10). The beauty of the Christian religion above all other religions consists in its being so holy a religion. The excellence of the Word of God consists in its holiness (Psalm 119:140): 'Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it.' Verse 128: 'I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything; I hate every false way.' Verse 138: 'You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness and great faithfulness.' And verse 172: 'Let my tongue sing of Your word, for all Your commandments are

righteousness.' And Psalm 19:7-10: 'The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.' The loveliness and beauty of the Lord Jesus — whereby He is the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely — consists primarily in this: that He is 'the Holy One of God' (Acts 3:14), 'God's holy servant' (Acts 4:27), and 'He who is holy and true' (Revelation 3:7). All the spiritual beauty of His human nature — His meekness, humility, patience, heavenly-mindedness, love to God, love to people, condescension to the lowly and despised, compassion for the suffering — is all summed up in His holiness. And the beauty of His divine nature, of which the beauty of His human nature is the image and reflection, also consists primarily in His holiness. The glory of the gospel consists primarily in its being a holy gospel — a bright outshining of the holy beauty of God and Jesus Christ. The spiritual beauty of its doctrines consists in their being holy doctrines, doctrines in keeping with godliness. The spiritual beauty of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ consists in its being so holy a way. And the glory of heaven consists chiefly in its being the holy city, the holy Jerusalem, 'the habitation of God's holiness' and therefore of His glory (Isaiah 63:15). All the beauties of the new Jerusalem as described in the last two chapters of Revelation are simply various representations of this (Revelation 21:2, 10-11, 18, 21, 27; 22:1, 3).

And therefore it is primarily on account of this kind of excellence that the saints love all these things. They love the Word of God because it is very pure. They love the saints on this account. Heaven is lovely to them on this account, and the holy dwelling places of God are beautiful in their eyes on this account. They love God on this account, and on this account they primarily love Christ, and their hearts delight in the doctrines of the gospel and rest sweetly in the way of salvation revealed in it.

Under the first distinguishing characteristic of gracious affections I observed that those who are regenerated receive a new supernatural sense — something like a divine spiritual taste that in its whole nature is different from every previous kind of sensation, just as taste is different from any of the other five senses. Through this new sense of mind, a true saint perceives something in spiritual and divine things that is as completely different from what natural people perceive in those same things as the sweet taste of honey is different from the idea people get of honey by looking at it or touching it. Now this — the beauty of holiness — is the thing in spiritual and divine things that is perceived by this spiritual sense, so different from all that natural people perceive in them. This kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense, and holiness is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste. Scripture frequently presents the beauty and sweetness of holiness as the great object of spiritual taste and spiritual appetite. This was the sweet food of the holy soul of Jesus Christ (John 4:32, 34): 'I have food to eat that you do not know about... My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.' I know of no part of Scripture where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so deliber-

ately, fully, and extensively set forth as in Psalm 119. The psalmist declares his design in the opening verses and pursues it throughout to the end. In this psalm the excellence of holiness is presented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste, appetite, and delight. God's law — that great expression and outshining of the holiness of God's nature and prescription of holiness for the creature — is presented throughout as the food and delight, the great object of love, appetite, agreement, and rejoicing of the gracious nature. The gracious nature prizes God's commandments above gold, even the finest gold, and to it they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, and this on account of their holiness, as was observed earlier. The same psalmist declares in Psalm 19:8-10 that holiness is the sweetness a spiritual taste relishes in God's law: 'The commandment of the Lord is pure; the fear of the Lord is clean; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.'

Holy love has a holy object. The holiness of love consists especially in this: that it is love for what is holy, as holy — that is, love for it on account of its holiness. So it is the holiness of the object that love fixes on and rests in. A holy nature must above all else love what is most agreeable to itself in holy things. And what is most agreeable to a holy nature in divine things is surely their holiness — for nothing can be more agreeable to any nature than what shares its own nature. Holy nature must above all else be agreeable to holy nature. Therefore the holy nature of God and Christ, the Word of God, and other divine things must above all else be agreeable to the holy nature that is in the saints.

Again, a holy nature undoubtedly loves holy things especially for the very quality for which a sinful nature is hostile toward them. The primary reason sinful nature is at enmity against holy things is their holiness — it is for this that the carnal mind is at enmity against God, against the law of God, and against the people of God. This is a straightforward argument from contraries: from contrary causes to contrary effects, from opposite natures to opposite inclinations. We know that holiness is directly contrary in nature to wickedness. Therefore, just as it is the nature of wickedness chiefly to oppose and hate holiness, so it must be the nature of holiness chiefly to incline toward and delight in holiness.

The holy nature of the saints and angels in heaven — where its true tendency is most fully expressed — is chiefly engaged by the holiness of divine things. This is the divine beauty that chiefly captures the attention, admiration, and praise of the bright and burning seraphim (Isaiah 6:3): 'And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."' And Revelation 4:8: 'Day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."' The glorified saints respond the same way (Revelation 15:4): 'Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy.'

Scripture likewise presents the saints on earth as adoring God primarily on this account, admiring and extolling all His attributes either as deriving their loveliness from His holiness or as being a part of it. When they praise God for His power, it is His holiness that engages them (Psalm 98:1): 'O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.' When they praise Him for His

justice and awesome majesty (Psalm 99:2-3): 'The Lord is great in Zion, and He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; holy is He.' Verse 5: 'Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool; holy is He.' Verses 8-9: 'O Lord our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God to them, and yet an avenger of their evil deeds. Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy hill, for holy is the Lord our God.' When they praise God for His mercy and faithfulness (Psalm 97:11-12): 'Light is sown like seed for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart. Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name.' And 1 Samuel 2:2: 'There is no one holy like the Lord, indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.'

By this, then, everyone may test their affections — especially their love and joy. Different kinds of creatures reveal their different natures very much through the different things they relish as their proper good — one delights in what another despises. So great is the difference between true saints and natural people. Natural people have no sense of the goodness and excellence of holy things for their holiness. They have no taste for that kind of good, and so may be said not to know that divine good — not to see it. It is wholly hidden from them. But the saints, by God's mighty power, have it discovered to them. They receive that supernatural, most noble, and divine sense by which they perceive it. And it is this that captivates their hearts and delights them above all things. It is the most lovely and sweet thing to the heart of a true saint that is to be found in heaven or earth — what above all else draws and engages his soul, and wherein above all things he places his happiness and counts on for refreshment and enjoyment in this world

and full satisfaction and blessedness in the next. By this you may examine your love to God and to Jesus Christ, your love to the Word of God, your joy in them, your love to the people of God, and your desires after heaven — whether they arise from a supreme delight in this kind of beauty, without being primarily moved by your imagined interest in these things or expectations from them. There are many intense affections, great seeming love and ecstatic joys, that have nothing of this holy taste belonging to them.

In particular, by what has been said you may test your discoveries of the glory of God's grace and love, and the affections arising from them. The grace of God may appear lovely in two ways: either as a useful good — something that greatly serves my interest and suits my self-love — or as a beautiful good in itself, a part of the moral and spiritual excellence of the divine nature. It is in this second way that true saints have their hearts affected and their love captured by the free grace of God first of all.

From what has been said, it appears that if people have a strong sense of the natural perfections of God and are greatly moved by them — or have any other kind of perception of God that does not consist in or imply a sense of the beauty of His moral perfections — this is no certain sign of grace. In particular, having a strong sense of the awesome greatness and terrible majesty of God is no such sign, for this is only God's natural perfection. People may perceive it while being entirely blind to the beauty of His moral perfection, with none of that spiritual taste that relishes this divine sweetness.

It has already been shown under the first distinguishing mark of gracious affections that what is spiritual is entirely different in its nature from anything a graceless person is capable of while re-

maining graceless. But those wholly without grace can have a clear sight and very strong, affecting sense of God's greatness, His mighty power, and His awesome majesty. The demons have this, even though they have lost the spiritual knowledge of God that consists in a sense of the loveliness of His moral perfections. They are completely without any sense or relish of that kind of beauty, yet they have a very great knowledge of what we might call the natural glory of God — His awesome greatness and majesty. This they behold, and the apprehension of it moves them, and therefore they tremble before Him. All rational beings will behold this glory of God at the day of judgment — God will cause all of them to see it to an extraordinary degree: angels and demons, saints and sinners alike. He will make manifest His infinite greatness and awesome majesty to every one in an open, clear, and undeniable way, in a light that none can resist, when 'He shall come in the glory of His Father and every eye shall see Him.' When people cry to the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him who sits on the throne, they are described as seeing the glory of God's majesty (Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21). God will make all His enemies behold this, and they will live in a most clear and affecting view of it in hell, for all eternity. God has repeatedly declared His unchangeable purpose to make all His enemies know Him in this respect — repeatedly attaching to His threatenings against them the words 'and they shall know that I am the Lord.' Indeed He has sworn that all people shall see His glory in this respect (Numbers 14:21): 'As I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.' And this kind of manifestation of God is frequently spoken of in Scripture as made, or to be made, in the sight of God's enemies in this world (Exodus 9:16 and 14:18 and 15:16, Psalms 66:3 and 46:10, and

many other places). This was the kind of manifestation God made of Himself to the wicked congregation at Mount Sinai, deeply affecting all of them so that all the people in the camp trembled. Wicked people and demons will see and have a strong sense of every aspect of God's glory — except only the beauty of His moral perfection. They will see His infinite greatness and majesty, His infinite power; they will be fully convinced of His omniscience, His eternity, and His immutability. They will see and know everything pertaining to His moral attributes themselves — except only the beauty and loveliness of those attributes. They will see and know that He is perfectly just, righteous, and true; that He is a holy God, of purer eyes than to behold evil, who cannot look on iniquity. They will see the wonderful displays of His infinite goodness and free grace to the saints. Nothing will be hidden from their eyes but only the beauty of these moral attributes, and that beauty of the other attributes which arises from them. And so natural people in this world are capable of having a very affecting sense of everything else pertaining to God, but only this beauty is hidden from them. Nebuchadnezzar had a great and moving sense of the infinite greatness and awesome majesty of God, of His supreme and absolute dominion, His mighty and irresistible power, and His sovereignty. He felt that he and all the inhabitants of the earth were nothing before God, and had a strong conviction in his conscience of God's justice and an affecting sense of His great goodness (Daniel 4:1-3, 34-35, 37). The sense that Darius had of God's perfections seems very similar to his (Daniel 6:25 and following). But the saints and angels behold the glory of God that consists in the beauty of His holiness. And it is this sight alone that will melt and humble the hearts of people, wean them from the world, draw

them to God, and truly change them. A sight of the awesome greatness of God may overpower people's strength and be more than they can endure. But if the moral beauty of God remains hidden, the enmity of the heart will remain in its full force. No love will be kindled, nothing will effectively win the will, and the will remains unmoved. But the first glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God shining into the heart produces all these effects — as it were with omnipotent power that nothing can resist.

The sense that natural people have of the awesome greatness of God may affect them in various ways — it may not only terrify them but also elevate them and raise their joy and praise, depending on their circumstances. This will be the natural effect of it when a person receives some remarkable mercy from God, under the influence of purely natural principles. It has already been shown that receiving kindness can, through natural principles, affect the heart with gratitude and praise to God. If a person at the same time receives remarkable kindness from God and also has a sense of His infinite greatness — of being nothing in comparison to Him — this will naturally raise the gratitude and praise even higher, for kindness to one so vastly inferior. A sense of God's greatness had this effect on Nebuchadnezzar when he received the extraordinary favor of restoration after having been driven out from among people and dwelling with the beasts. A sense of God's exceeding greatness raised his gratitude very high, so that he extolled and magnified God in the loftiest terms and called on all the world to do the same. And much more: if a natural person is greatly affected by God's infinite greatness and majesty while also strongly believing that this great God has made him His child and

special favorite and promised him eternal glory in His highest love, this will — following the natural course of things — raise his joy and praise to a great height.

Therefore it is beyond doubt that too much weight has been placed by many people recently on discoveries of God's greatness, awesome majesty, and natural perfections, operating in the manner described above, without any real view of the holy, lovely majesty of God. Experience abundantly confirms what both reason and Scripture declare on this matter. Many people who have seemed to be overwhelmed by God's greatness and awesome majesty, and consequently elevated in the manner described, have been far from showing the Christian spirit and character in any corresponding proportion, and far from bearing fruit in their lives in any way consistent with genuine grace. On the contrary, their discoveries have worked in ways directly opposite to the operation of truly spiritual discoveries.

This is not to say that a sense of God's greatness and natural attributes is not extremely useful and necessary. As I noted earlier, this is implied in a manifestation of the beauty of God's holiness. Though that is something beyond it, holiness presupposes it, as the greater presupposes the less. And though natural people may have a sense of God's natural perfections, this is undoubtedly more frequent and common among the saints than among natural people. Grace enables people to see these things in a better way than natural people see them. Grace not only enables them to see God's natural attributes, but the beauty of those attributes that — in our way of conceiving of God — is derived from His holiness.

Fourth distinguishing sign: gracious affections arise from the mind's being enlightened to understand and perceive divine things rightly and spiritually.

Holy affections are not heat without light — they always arise from some understanding, some spiritual instruction the mind has received, some light or actual knowledge. The child of God is graciously affected because he sees and understands something more of divine things than before — more of God or Christ and the glorious things presented in the gospel. He has a clearer and better view than he had when he was not affected. Either he receives a new understanding of divine things, or a former knowledge is renewed after it had faded. As 1 John 4:7 says, 'Everyone who loves knows God.' Philippians 1:9: 'I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.' Romans 10:2: 'They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.' Colossians 3:10: 'The new self, which is being renewed to a true knowledge.' Psalm 43:3-4: 'O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill.' John 6:45: 'It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught of God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.' Knowledge is the key that first opens the hard heart and enlarges the affections, opening the way for people into the kingdom of heaven (Luke 11:52: 'You have taken away the key of knowledge').

There are many affections that do not arise from any light in the understanding. When this is the case, it is a sure sign that those affections are not spiritual, no matter how intense they may be. People who have such affections do have some new impressions that they did not have before — it is impossible for the mind

to be affected by something it has no conception of. But in many cases the impressions or conceptions they have, which affect them, have nothing of the nature of knowledge or instruction in them. For example: when a person is affected by a vivid idea suddenly impressed on his mind of some shape, some beautiful and pleasant face, some shining light, or some other glorious outward appearance, there is indeed something that the mind perceives — but there is nothing of the nature of instruction in it. People become no wiser from such things, no more knowledgeable about God, or a Mediator between God and humanity, or the way of salvation through Christ, or anything contained in the doctrines of the gospel. From these external ideas people gain no further acquaintance with God in any of His attributes or perfections; no further understanding of His word or any of His ways or works. Truly spiritual and gracious affections are not raised in this way. They arise from the enlightenment of the understanding to understand the things taught about God and Christ in a new manner — coming to a new understanding of the excellent nature of God and His wonderful perfections; some new view of Christ in His spiritual excellence and fullness; or things pertaining to the way of salvation by Christ being opened in a new way, so that one now sees how it is and understands those divine and spiritual doctrines that were once foolishness to him. Such enlightenments of the understanding are entirely different in their nature from vivid ideas of shapes and colors, outward brightness and glory, or sounds and voices. The fact that all gracious affections arise from some instruction or enlightening of the understanding is therefore further proof — beyond what has already been observed — that affections arising from impressions on the imagination are not gracious affections.

From this it also appears that affections arising from scripture texts coming to the mind are empty when the ground of the affection is not any instruction received from those texts or any truth taught in them, but only the manner of their coming. When Christ makes scripture the means of the heart's burning with gracious affection, it is 'by opening the Scriptures to their understanding' (Luke 24:32): 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?' It also appears that affection occasioned by a scripture text is empty when it is founded on something supposed to be taught by that text which is not actually contained in it or in any other scripture. Such supposed instruction is not real instruction but a mistake and misunderstanding of the mind. For example: when people suppose that some scripture coming to mind expressly teaches them that they in particular are beloved of God, that their sins are forgiven, that God is their Father, and the like — this is a mistake. Scripture nowhere expressly identifies the individual persons who are beloved; it reveals only the qualifications of those who are beloved of God, and the matter can be learned from scripture only by drawing that conclusion from those qualifications. Things are to be learned from scripture only in the way they are actually taught in scripture.

In the instances mentioned, and in some others that could be mentioned, religious affections actually arise from ignorance rather than instruction. For example, some find that they speak freely and fluently in prayer and call this 'God's presence with them,' and this affects them further, setting their affections in motion and increasing them. They do not examine the cause of this fluency, which may arise from many things other than the spiritual

presence of God. Some are greatly affected by apt thoughts that come to them about scripture and call it the Spirit of God teaching them. They attribute many workings of their own minds — which they think highly of and are pleased and captured by — to the special immediate influences of God's Spirit, and so are powerfully moved by their supposed privilege. There are also cases in which it is evident that the first ground of a person's affection is some bodily sensation. The physical spirits are by some cause — and probably sometimes by the devil — suddenly and unaccountably set into a very pleasant motion, causing the person to feel a pleasantness in the body. The physical spirits are put into the kind of motion usually connected with a lifted and cheerful mind, and the soul, by the natural laws of the soul-body union, therefore feels pleasure. The motion of the physical spirits does not first arise from any affection or thought of the mind — the very first thing felt is an exhilaration of the physical spirits and a pleasant external sensation, perhaps in the chest. From ignorance, the person is surprised and begins to think: surely this is the Holy Spirit coming into me. Then the mind begins to be affected and elevated — first with great joy, then with many other affections in a very turbulent way, throwing both body and mind into a great upheaval. Though as I noted earlier the soul alone is the seat of the affections, this does not prevent bodily sensations from serving in this way as an occasion of affections in the mind.

Even if people's religious affections do truly arise from some instruction or light in the understanding, the affection is not gracious unless the light that grounds it is spiritual. Affections may be stirred by an understanding of things that comes from purely human teaching, through the ordinary use of the mind's faculties.

People may be greatly affected by knowledge of religious matters obtained this way, just as some philosophers have been powerfully moved — almost carried out of themselves — by discoveries in mathematics and natural philosophy. People may also be greatly affected by common illuminations of the Spirit of God, in which God assists people's faculties to a higher degree of the kind of understanding of religious matters they possess in some measure through the ordinary exercise and development of their own minds. Such illuminations may greatly affect the mind — as they did many whom Scripture describes as having 'once been enlightened.' But these affections are not spiritual.

If the scriptures teach us anything at all, they teach us that there is such a thing as a spiritual, supernatural understanding of divine things that is unique to the saints — something those who are not saints have nothing of. The apostle speaks of a kind of understanding, perceiving, or discerning of divine things that natural people have nothing of in 1 Corinthians 2:14: 'A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.' There is certainly a kind of seeing or discerning spiritual things that is unique to the saints, spoken of in 1 John 3:6: 'No one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.' And 3 John 11: 'The one who does evil has not seen God.' And John 6:40: 'This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life.' John 14:19: 'The world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me.' John 17:3: 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.' Matthew 11:27: 'No one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son,

and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.' John 12:45: 'He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.' Psalm 9:10: 'Those who know Your name will put their trust in You.' Philippians 3:8: 'I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.' Verse 10: 'That I may know Him.' And there are countless other passages throughout the Bible that show the same. That there is such a thing as an understanding of divine things that is in its nature and kind wholly different from all knowledge that natural people have is evident from the fact that Scripture calls it 'spiritual understanding' in Colossians 1:9: 'We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.' It has already been shown that what is 'spiritual,' in the ordinary use of that word in the New Testament, is entirely different in nature and kind from all that natural people are or can be the subjects of.

Spiritual understanding consists in a new kind of sensation — a new spiritual sense — that is entirely different in nature from anything a natural person has. This is what 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 describes: 'And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.' Since the true religion of the heart consists primarily in love, its first and primary foundation must be a knowledge of the

loveliness of its object. Therefore the first and foundational object of spiritual understanding is the beauty of the moral perfection of divine things.

To sum up: spiritual understanding is a sense of the heart of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together with all the discernment and knowledge that flows from it.

When I speak of a 'sense of the heart,' I do not mean that understanding and will are the same faculty or that they cannot be distinguished. What I mean is that when the mind perceives the amiableness of a thing, that perception carries a sense of the heart with it — it is not a mere cold speculative opinion that such and such a thing is amiable. It involves the heart as well as the mind.

There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet and having a sense of its sweetness. A person may believe that honey is sweet without ever tasting it — that is a notional understanding. But the sense of its sweetness is something different: the mind not only speculates and beholds but relishes and feels. That is the difference between speculative or notional knowledge and a sense of the heart.

The apostle makes this distinction between merely speculative knowledge and spiritual knowledge. He speaks of speculative knowledge as having 'the form of knowledge' (Romans 2:20). But spiritual knowledge is represented in Scripture by relishing and tasting: 2 Corinthians 2:14 ('God always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place'); Matthew 16:23 ('You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's'); 1 Peter 2:2-3 ('Like new-

born babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord'); Song of Solomon 1:3 ('Your name is like purified oil'); and 1 John 2:20 ('You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know').

Spiritual understanding, then, primarily consists in this sense or taste of the moral beauty of divine things. Secondly, it includes all the knowledge and understanding of divine things that flows from this sense and depends on it — all the enlightened judgment, all the clearer views, all the notional knowledge that arises from having truly tasted and seen that God is good.

A true sense of the beauty of God's holiness opens up an entirely new world to the soul. It reveals the glory of all God's perfections and all His works. It provides the foundation for truly knowing Christ's sufficiency and suitableness as a Mediator. It shows the preciousness of His blood as an atonement for sin. It reveals the beauty of the way of salvation through Christ. It shows the excellence of the Word of God. It gives the true foundation for understanding the duties we owe to God. It reveals the true evil and danger of sin. It opens up the glory of heaven as the dwelling place of God's holiness. It shows the loveliness of the saints and angels as holy beings. In short, holiness is, so to speak, the Divinity of Divinity — the beauty that makes God God. Those who have no sense of it truly know nothing of spiritual things at all. For them, the whole spiritual world is hidden. Giving someone this sense is like opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and creating a new world before them.

From this sense of the beauty of holiness, all true experiential knowledge of religion arises. Without seeing the beauty of holiness, a person is ignorant of all gracious exercises of the soul. They do not understand holy comforts and spiritual delights. They cannot recognize the saving influences of the Spirit. They are blind to the greatest works of God. And the whole spiritual world is hidden from them.

When God implants this spiritual sense in someone, it produces a tremendous change. If this sense were not given even in a small degree at the very first moment of conversion, the change that takes place at conversion would be even more remarkable than giving sight to someone who was born blind. This spiritual sense is infinitely more noble than physical sight. The difference it makes is therefore immeasurably greater than any change in physical perception.

This kind of understanding or knowledge — the spiritual sense of divine beauty — is the knowledge from which all truly gracious affections flow. By it, therefore, all affections must be tested. Affections that arise entirely from any other kind of knowledge or from any other kind of perception are empty and worthless.

From what has been said, we can understand the most essential difference between the light or understanding given through the common influences of the Spirit of God on natural people and the saving instruction given to the saints. The saving instruction primarily and most essentially consists in beholding the moral beauty that is in divine things — the only true moral good, to which the soul of fallen humanity is by nature completely blind. Common illumination, by contrast, consists only in a deeper understanding of things that people can know to some degree through the ordi-

nary exercise of their natural faculties. That knowledge extends only to what we might call the natural aspects of religion. For example, in the awakenings and convictions of conscience that natural people often experience, the Spirit of God gives no knowledge of the true moral beauty of divine things. Instead, He only assists the mind to a clearer awareness of guilt — sin's relation to punishment and its connection with suffering — without any sight of sin's true moral evil or its ugliness as sin. It also gives a clearer idea of God's natural perfections: not His holy beauty and glory, but His awesome and terrible greatness. A clear sight of this is what will awaken the consciences of wicked people at the day of judgment, without any spiritual light. And a lesser degree of the same thing awakens the consciences of natural people in this world, again without spiritual light. The same kind of sight or perception of God — in smaller measure — makes awakened sinners in this world feel the dreadful guilt of sin against so great and terrible a God, and fills them with fearful anticipation of divine wrath. At the day of judgment, this sight will be given in full measure, thoroughly convincing all wicked people of the infinitely dreadful nature and guilt of sin, and overwhelming them with apprehensions of wrath, when Christ comes in the glory of His power and majesty and every eye sees Him. In common illuminations that sometimes stir natural people to religious desire, love, and joy, the mind is only assisted to a clearer perception of the natural good that is in divine things. Sometimes under common illuminations people are moved by ideas of the natural good that is in heaven — its outward glory, its peace, its honor and advancement, the experience of being there as objects of God's high favor and the great esteem of men and angels. Many things exhibited in the gospel concerning God, Christ,

and the way of salvation have a natural good in them that appeals to the natural principle of self-love. For example, in God's great goodness to sinners and in the wonderful dying love of Christ, there is a natural good that all people love as they love themselves — but there is also a spiritual and holy beauty that only the regenerate can see. Therefore many things in the Word of God's grace, as delivered in the gospel, may cause natural people to receive it immediately with joy when they hear it. All the love that natural people have toward God, Christ, Christian virtues, and good people does not arise from any sight of the loveliness of holiness or true moral excellence. It arises only from the natural good found in those things. All the hatred natural people have for sin comes from the same natural principles as a person's hatred of a tiger for its ferocity, or their aversion to a serpent for its venom and danger. And all their love of Christian virtue comes from no higher principle than their appreciation of a pleasant personality, which seems appealing to natural people — but no more than silver and gold appear appealing to a merchant, or the blackness of rich soil appears beautiful to a farmer.

From what has been said about the nature of spiritual understanding, it is clear that spiritual understanding does not consist in any new doctrinal knowledge, or in having new propositions suggested to the mind that were never before read or heard. It is plain that suggesting new propositions is something entirely different from giving the mind a new taste or sense of beauty and sweetness. It is also clear that spiritual knowledge does not consist in any new doctrinal explanation of a passage of Scripture, since that too is

merely doctrinal knowledge — knowledge of propositions. Explaining a passage of Scripture doctrinally only tells us what propositions or teachings that passage contains.

It follows from this that spiritual understanding of Scripture does not consist in unlocking the mystical meaning of its parables, types, and allegories, since that is only doctrinal explanation. A person who explains what is meant by the rocky ground and the seed that springs up quickly and soon withers is only explaining what propositions or doctrines that parable teaches. A person who explains what Jacob's ladder signifies — with the angels of God ascending and descending on it — or what Joshua's leading Israel through the Jordan typified, is only showing what propositions are hidden in those passages. Many people can explain these types who have no spiritual knowledge whatsoever. It is possible for someone to know how to interpret every type, parable, riddle, and allegory in the Bible without having a single ray of spiritual light in his mind. He may not have the slightest degree of that spiritual sense of the holy beauty of divine things we have been discussing, and may see nothing of this kind of glory in any of these mysteries or in any other part of Scripture. The apostle makes it plain that a person may understand all such mysteries and still have no saving grace: 1 Corinthians 13:2: 'And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.' Those who are therefore lifted up in their opinion of their own spiritual attainments because ideas about the mystical meaning of various scripture passages come to their minds — as though this were spir-

itual understanding given directly by the Spirit of God — are badly mistaken. And what has been said shows the worthlessness of the affections that arise from such notions.

From what has been said, it is also clear that it is not spiritual knowledge for people to be informed of their duty through immediate inward suggestions that such and such outward actions are the will of God. Even if we suppose that God does sometimes make His will known to His people through immediate inward suggestions, such suggestions have nothing of the nature of spiritual light. Such knowledge would only be one kind of doctrinal knowledge. A proposition about God's will is just as much a doctrine of religion as a proposition about the nature of God or the works of God. Having any such proposition declared to a person — whether by speech or inward suggestion — is vastly different from having the holy beauty of divine things manifested to the soul, which is what spiritual knowledge most essentially consists in. Balaam had no spiritual light, even though the Spirit of God suggested the will of God to him directly from time to time — telling him where to go and what to do and say.

It is clear, therefore, that being led and directed in this way — by immediate suggestions — is not the holy and spiritual leading of the Spirit of God that is unique to the saints and is a distinguishing mark of the sons of God, spoken of in Romans 8:14: 'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.' And Galatians 5:18: 'But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.'

Some people receive what they take to be the will of God concerning their actions through a scripture text that suddenly and extraordinarily comes to their minds. The text, as it stood in the

Bible before coming to mind, referred to the actions of some other person — but they suppose that since God sent the words to them, He intended something further by them and meant to direct a particular action of theirs. Even so, the case is unchanged. The fact that the suggestion comes accompanied by an apt scripture text does not make it a matter of spiritual instruction. Consider an example: suppose a person in New England is uncertain whether it is his duty to go into some Catholic or heathen land where he would face many difficulties and dangers. He prays to God to show him his duty, and afterward those words God spoke to Jacob in Genesis 46 suddenly and extraordinarily come to his mind, as though spoken to him: 'Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again.' As the words stood in the Bible before coming to his mind, they referred only to Jacob and his situation. But the person supposes that as God has brought and applied them to him, they carry a new meaning: that Egypt stands for the particular country he has in mind, that the action intended is his going there, and that the promise means God will bring him back to New England. There is nothing of the nature of a spiritual or gracious leading of the Spirit in this, because there is nothing of the nature of spiritual understanding in it. Understanding scripture texts this way is not spiritual understanding of them. To understand Scripture spiritually is to rightly understand what is in the Scripture — what was in it before it was understood. It is to rightly understand the meaning that has always been contained in Scripture, not to create a new meaning. When the mind is spiritually enlightened to rightly understand Scripture, it is enabled to see what was always there but previously unseen because of blind-

ness. If the reason it was not seen was blindness, that proves the meaning was already there — for it is no blindness to fail to see a meaning that was never there in the first place. Spiritual enlightenment is described in Psalm 119:18 as opening the eyes: 'Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.' This implies that the reason the person had not seen those things in Scripture before was that his eyes were shut — which would not make sense if the meaning he now understands had not already been there, but had been newly added by the manner in which the words came to his mind. Creating a new meaning in Scripture is the same as creating new Scripture — it is properly adding to the Word, which carries a most dreadful curse. To spiritually understand Scripture is to have the eyes of the mind opened to behold the wonderful spiritual excellence of the glorious things contained in its true meaning — things that were always contained in it since it was written. It is to behold the lovely and bright manifestation of the divine perfections, the excellence and sufficiency of Christ, the excellence and suitableness of the way of salvation through Christ, and the spiritual glory of the precepts and promises of Scripture. All of these things are in the Bible and always were there, and would have been seen before if not for blindness — without any new sense being added by God sending particular words to a particular person with a new meaning.

The gracious leading of the Spirit consists in two things: partly in instructing a person in his duty through the Spirit, and partly in powerfully moving him to comply with that instruction. As far as the gracious leading of the Spirit involves instruction, it consists in being guided by a spiritual and discerning taste — a taste for what has true moral beauty. Spiritual knowledge primarily consists in a

taste or relish for the loveliness and beauty of what is truly good and holy. This holy relish discerns and distinguishes between good and evil, between holy and unholy, without needing a chain of reasoning. A person who has a true sense of physical beauty knows what is beautiful simply by looking at it — he does not need to reason through the proportions of the features to decide whether a face is beautiful. A single glance is enough. A person with a well-trained musical ear knows whether what he hears is true harmony — he does not need the calculations of a mathematician about the proportions of the notes. A person with a well-trained palate knows whether food is good as soon as he tastes it, without needing a physician's analysis. There is a holy beauty and sweetness in words and actions, just as there is a natural beauty in faces and sounds and sweetness in food. As Job 12:11 says, 'Does not the ear test words, as the palate tastes its food?' When a holy and lovely action is suggested to the thoughts of a holy soul, that soul — if actively exercising its spiritual taste — immediately sees beauty in it, and so is drawn to it and embraces it. When an unworthy and unholy action is suggested to it, its sanctified eye sees no beauty in it and takes no pleasure in it. Its sanctified taste finds no sweetness in it; on the contrary, it is repulsive. Its holy taste and appetite naturally leads it toward what is truly lovely, and naturally brings such things to mind — as a healthy appetite naturally calls to mind its proper food. In this way a holy person is led by the Spirit: he is instructed and guided by his holy taste and the disposition of his heart. Through the active exercise of grace, he easily distinguishes good from evil and knows at once what is a suitable and lovely response toward God and toward people in any given situation. He judges what is right, as it were spontaneously and on his own,

without a particular chain of argument — guided by the beauty he perceives and the goodness he tastes. This is why Christ rebuked the Pharisees for not judging by themselves what was right, without needing miracles to demonstrate it (Luke 12:57). The apostle also seems to have this kind of spiritual judgment in view in Romans 12:2: 'And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.'

There is a kind of good taste of natural beauty that learned people have long spoken of — a taste exercised in judging temporal things, such as the soundness of a speech, the quality of a writing style, the beauty of a poem, or the gracefulness of conduct. A noted philosopher of our time writes about it this way: to have taste is to give things their real value, to be moved by what is good and offended by what is bad — not to be dazzled by false appearances, but to judge soundly in spite of every color and disguise that might deceive. Taste and judgment, then, ought to be the same thing — yet it is easy to see a difference between them. Judgment forms its opinions through reflection: reason takes a kind of roundabout course to reach its conclusion. It assumes principles, draws consequences, and then pronounces — but only after a thorough examination of the case, so that when it has spoken, it is ready to explain its reasoning. Good taste observes none of these formalities: before there is time to deliberate, it has already decided. As soon as the object is presented, the impression is made and the response formed — nothing more is required. Just as the ear is hurt by a harsh sound and the nose is pleased by a pleasant scent before reason has engaged with these objects to evaluate them, so taste

opens itself at once and precedes all reflection. Reflection may afterward confirm it and uncover the hidden reasons for its response, but taste could not wait for reflection. Often it never discovers those reasons at all, and no matter how hard it tries, it cannot determine what led it to the conclusion it reached. This is very different from the process judgment follows in its decisions — unless we say that good taste is, in a sense, a first impulse or instinct of right reason that moves with speed and guides more reliably than all deliberate reasoning could. It is a first glance of the eye that reveals the nature and relationships of things in an instant.

Now just as philosophers speak of this kind of natural taste of the mind — by which people are guided in their judgment of natural beauty, gracefulness, propriety, and excellence in speeches and actions, judging as if by a glance of the eye or by immediate inner sensation at the first impression of an object — there is likewise such a thing as a divine taste given and maintained by the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints. By this divine taste, saints are similarly led and guided in discerning and distinguishing the true spiritual and holy beauty of actions. They do so more easily, readily, and accurately in proportion to how much of the Spirit of God dwells in them. In this way the children of God are led by the Spirit of God in their behavior in the world.

A holy disposition and spiritual taste, where grace is strong and active, will enable a soul to determine what actions are right and fitting for a Christian not only more quickly but far more accurately than the greatest natural ability without it. This can be illustrated by how certain habits of mind and dispositions of heart — even ones lower than true grace — teach and guide a person's actions. For example, a man who is very good-natured is taught by

his good nature how to act generously among people. It directs him, in every situation, toward the words and actions that best express goodness — more reliably than the strongest reason could guide a man with a harsh disposition. Or consider a man whose heart is under the influence of a deep and tender friendship toward another person. Even if he is a man of ordinary ability, this disposition of his heart will guide him far more readily and precisely to a manner of speech and behavior that is in every way warm, kind, and fitting — better than the greatest natural capacity without it. He has, as it were, a spirit within him that guides him. The habit of his mind carries a taste that immediately senses and responds to what is kind and good, and turns away from the opposite, making the distinction in a moment more precisely than the most careful reasoning could determine over many hours. It is like the inward nature and tendency of a stone dropped from a height: it finds the center of the earth more exactly in an instant than the ablest mathematician without it could determine through his most accurate calculations in a whole day. This is how a spiritual disposition and taste teaches and guides a person in his conduct in the world. In the same way, a notably humble, meek, or charitable disposition will direct a person of ordinary ability to behavior consistent with Christian rules of humility, meekness, and charity more readily and precisely than the most diligent study and careful reasoning of a person with the strongest mental faculties who lacks a Christian spirit within him. So also a spirit of love to God, holy reverence before God, childlike trust in God, and a heavenly disposition will teach and guide a person in his behavior.

It is extremely difficult for a wicked person, lacking divine principles in his heart to guide him, to know how to conduct himself like a true Christian — with the life, beauty, and heavenly character of a genuinely holy and humble spirit. He does not know how to put on those garments, and they do not fit him. As Ecclesiastes 10:15 says, 'The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not even know how to go to a city.' Proverbs 10:32: 'The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable.' Proverbs 15:2: 'The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.' And Proverbs 16:23: 'The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.'

When saints judge actions through a spiritual taste, they do not consciously consult a particular rule of God's Word for every word and action whose goodness or evil they are discerning. Yet their taste itself is, in a general way, subject to the rule of God's Word and must be tested and evaluated by it and by sound reasoning from it. This is like a man with a well-trained palate who judges particular foods by his taste — yet his palate itself must be evaluated by certain rules and principles to determine whether it is rightly trained. A spiritual taste of the soul powerfully assists the soul in reasoning through the Word of God and in judging the true meaning of its rules. It removes the bias of a corrupted appetite and naturally leads the thoughts in the right direction. It casts light on the Word of God and causes its true meaning to come naturally to mind, through the harmony that exists between the disposition and relish of a sanctified soul and the true meaning of God's Word. This harmony even tends to bring the relevant scripture texts to mind on fitting occasions — just as a particular state of stomach and palate tends to call to mind the kinds of food and drink that

suit that state. In this way the children of God are led by the Spirit of God, both in judging actions themselves and in meditating on, judging, and applying the rules of God's holy Word. And so God teaches them His statutes and causes them to understand the way of His precepts — which the psalmist so often prays for.

But this leading of the Spirit is something vastly different from what some people call by that name. What they call it does not consist in being taught the statutes and precepts God has already given — it consists in receiving new precepts through immediate inward speech or suggestion. It involves no tasting of the true excellence of things, no judgment or discernment of the nature of things at all. They do not determine the will of God through any taste or relish, or by any judgment about the nature of things — they receive what they take to be an immediate dictate about the particular thing to be done. There is no wisdom or judgment involved in the process. But the leading of the Spirit that is unique to God's children imparts true wisdom and holy discernment, so often spoken of in the Word of God. This is as far above the other way as the stars are above a glowworm. Balaam and Saul — who were sometimes led by the Spirit in that other way — never had this wisdom. And no natural person can have it without a change of nature.

What has been said about the nature of spiritual understanding — as consisting most essentially in a divine, supernatural sense and relish of the heart — not only shows that none of it is present in the false leading of the Spirit just described, but also shows the difference between spiritual understanding and all forms of enthusiasm. This includes all imaginary visions of God, Christ, and heaven; all supposed testimonies of the Spirit and assurances of

God's love through immediate inward suggestion; all impressions of future events and supposed immediate revelations of secret facts; all enthusiastic impressions and applications of scripture words as though they were words now immediately spoken by God to a particular person in a new meaning going beyond what the words contain as they stand in the Bible; and all interpretations of the mystical meaning of Scripture through supposed immediate revelation. None of these things consist in a divine sense and relish of the heart for the holy beauty and excellence of divine things. They have nothing to do with such a sense. All of them consist in impressions on the head — all fall under the category of impressions on the imagination. They consist in producing outward ideas in the mind: ideas of outward shapes and colors, words spoken, letters written, or ideas of external and sensible things belonging to actions done or events accomplished or yet to come. An enthusiastic supposed manifestation of the love of God is produced by exciting the idea of a smiling face or some other pleasant outward appearance, or the idea of pleasant words spoken or written impressed on the imagination, or some pleasant bodily sensation. When someone receives what they think is an imaginary revelation of a secret fact, it comes through external ideas — either words implying a declaration of that fact, or imagined visible and sensible circumstances of the fact. When the supposed leading of the Spirit directs outward behavior, it comes either by bringing to mind the idea of words (which are outward things) — whether words of Scripture or other words taken as an immediate command from God — or by strongly impressing the ideas of the outward actions themselves. When an interpretation of a scripture type or allegory

is immediately and extraordinarily suggested with great force, it comes by suggesting words as though someone were whispering the meaning, or by stirring up other ideas in the imagination.

Experiences and discoveries of this kind commonly raise the affections of those deluded by them to a great height, producing a powerful upheaval in both soul and body. A very large part of the false religion that has existed in the world throughout history consists in just such discoveries and the affections that flow from them. Such things characterized the experiences of the ancient Pythagoreans among the pagans and many others who had strange ecstasies and raptures and claimed to have a divine inspiration and immediate revelations from heaven. Such things seem to have characterized the experiences of the Essenes, an ancient sect among the Jews, at and after the time of the apostles. Such things characterized the experiences of many of the ancient Gnostics, the Montanists, and many other heretical sects in the early centuries of the Christian church. And such things characterized the supposed direct communication with God, Christ, and the saints and angels of heaven claimed by the monks, hermits, and recluses who once filled the Roman church. Such things characterized the pretended high experiences and great spirituality of many enthusiastic sects that swarmed in the world after the Reformation — such as the Anabaptists, Antinomians, and Familists, the followers of Nicholas Stork, Thomas Muncer, John Becold, Henry Pfeifer, David George, Casper Swenckfield, Henry Nicolas, and Johannes Agricola Eislebius; the many wild enthusiasts who arose in England in the days of Oliver Cromwell; and the followers of Mistress Hutchinson in New England — as the eminently holy man Samuel Rutherford describes in detail in his *Display of the*

Spiritual Antichrist. And such things characterized the experiences of the later French Prophets and their followers. In these same things seems to lie the religion of the many kinds of enthusiasts of the present day. It is chiefly through this kind of religion that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. It is the tool he has most successfully used to confuse and destroy promising revivals of religion from the beginning of the Christian church to this day. When the Spirit of God is poured out to begin a glorious work, the old serpent moves as quickly as possible to introduce this counterfeit religion and mingle it with the true — and this has from time to time brought everything into confusion. The destructive consequences of it are hard to imagine until we see and are stunned by its awful effects and the terrible desolation it produces. If a revival of true religion begins on a very large scale, and yet this counterfeit enters, there is danger that it will do what Gideon's illegitimate son Abimelech did — never stopping until he had slain all seventy of his true-born brothers, with only one escaping by flight. Ministers must therefore keep strict watch and guard against such things, especially in times of great awakening. Common people are easily captivated by them, since they have such a dazzling and glittering appearance of high religion — and the devil hides his true form and appears as an angel of light, so that people are not afraid of him but instead many fall down and worship him.

The imagination seems to be where all of Satan's delusions are formed — delusions that sweep away those who are under the influence of false religion and counterfeit grace and affections. The imagination is the devil's great hiding place, the very nest of foul and deceptive spirits. It is very doubtful whether the devil can reach the soul of a person at all — to affect it, excite any thought or

impulse in it, or produce any effect in it — except through the imagination, which is that power of the soul by which it receives and is the subject of images or ideas of outward and sensible things. We know nothing about the laws and means by which the Creator has established communication between unembodied spirits — we do not know by what medium they make their thoughts known to one another or stir thoughts in one another. But for spirits united to bodies, those bodies are God's appointed medium of communication. They have no other means of acting on other creatures or being acted on by them than through the body. Therefore it is not to be supposed that Satan can excite any thought or produce any effect in the human soul except through some movement of the physical spirits, or by causing some motion or change in something belonging to the body. There is reason to think that the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul directly or in any way other than through the medium of the body, namely this: he cannot directly see or know the thoughts of the soul. Scripture abundantly declares that this is something unique to the omniscient God. But it seems unlikely that the devil can directly produce an effect that lies outside the range of his direct awareness. It seems unreasonable to suppose that his direct action could be beyond his own sight — or that it could be impossible for him to see what he himself directly does. Is it not unreasonable to suppose that any intelligent agent could by an act of his will produce effects consistent with his understanding — and produce them directly — while those effects lie entirely beyond his range of understanding and perception? If then the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul directly except through the physical spirits or through the body, it follows that he never accomplishes anything in the soul except

through the imagination — by exciting outward ideas. We know that changes in the body immediately produce in the mind only external ideas — ideas of the outward senses or ideas of the same outward nature. Reflection, abstraction, reasoning, and the thoughts and inner movements that flow from these acts of the mind are not the direct effects of impressions on the body. Therefore Satan can only access the soul through the imagination — to tempt and deceive it and to suggest things to it. This seems to explain why people suffering from melancholy are so visibly and remarkably subject to the suggestions and temptations of Satan. Melancholy is a disease that especially affects the physical spirits and involves weakness in the brain — the source of the physical spirits and, in a sense, the seat of the imagination. All ideas excited in the mind through the movement of the physical spirits or through changes in the body are produced by impressions made on the brain. The brain, being weakened and diseased by melancholy, is less under the control of the higher faculties of the soul, yields more easily to outside impressions, and is overpowered by the disordered movements of the physical spirits. This gives the devil a greater advantage to affect the mind by working on the imagination. When Satan casts those horrible suggestions into the minds of many melancholy people — suggestions for which they are not themselves responsible — he does so by exciting imaginary ideas: dreadful words or sentences, or other horrible outward images. When he tempts people who are not melancholy, he does it by presenting to the imagination, in a vivid and alluring way, the objects of their lusts — or by stirring up the ideas of words, and through them exciting thoughts, or by promoting an imagination of out-

ward actions, events, and circumstances. There are countless ways the mind can be led into all kinds of evil thoughts by exciting external ideas in the imagination.

If people keep no guard at these avenues through which Satan has access to the soul — to tempt and deceive it — they will certainly have more than enough of him. This is especially true if instead of guarding against him they open themselves up to him and seek and invite him — because he appears as an angel of light and counterfeits the illuminations and graces of the Spirit of God through inward whispers, immediate suggestions about facts and events, pleasant voices, beautiful images, and other impressions on the imagination. Many who are deluded by such things are lifted up by them and eagerly pursue them, experiencing a steady stream of them and being able to produce them nearly at will — especially when their pride and desire for attention calls for making a display of them before others. It is with them much as with those who claim the art of locating lost objects through impressions on their imagination: having opened themselves up to the devil, he is always ready at hand to give them the impression they seek.

Before I finish what I have to say on the subject of imaginations counterfeiting spiritual light and the affections that arise from them, I want to make something clear to prevent misunderstanding. I am far from concluding that no affections are spiritual when they are accompanied by imaginary ideas. Such is the nature of human beings that we can scarcely think intensely about anything without some kind of outward images. Such images arise and interpose themselves unavoidably in the course of our thoughts, though they are often very confused and not what the mind is actually attending to. When the mind is deeply engaged and the

thoughts are intense, the imagination is often stronger and the outward image more vivid — especially in people of certain bodily constitutions. But there is a great difference between these two things: lively imaginations arising from strong affections, and strong affections arising from lively imaginations. The first of these may be — and doubtless often is — the case in truly gracious affections. The affections do not arise from the imagination and have no dependence on it. On the contrary, the imagination is only an incidental effect or byproduct of the affection, due to the weakness of human nature. But when the second is the case — when the affection arises from the imagination and is built on it as its foundation instead of on a spiritual illumination or discovery — then the affection, however elevated, is worthless and empty. That is the point of what has been said about impressions on the imagination. With that clarification made, I move on to another mark of gracious affections.

Fifth distinguishing sign: truly gracious affections are accompanied by a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things.

This seems to be implied in the text that served as the foundation of this discourse: 'Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory' (1 Peter 1:8).

All truly gracious people have a solid, full, thorough, and effective conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel. By this I mean they no longer waver between two opinions. The great doctrines of the gospel are no longer uncertain matters of opinion — probable but still debatable. They are settled and determined points, as undoubted and indisputable, so that these people are not

afraid to stake everything on their truth. Their conviction is an effective conviction: the great, spiritual, mysterious, and invisible things of the gospel carry the influence of real and certain things upon them. These things have weight and power in their hearts, and accordingly rule their affections and govern their lives. Regarding Christ's being the Son of God and Savior of the world and the great things He has revealed about Himself, His Father, and the world to come — they do not merely have a prevailing opinion that these things are true, yielding a tentative assent as they might to many other uncertain questions. They see that it is really so: their eyes are opened, and they see that Jesus truly is the Christ, the Son of the living God. As for the things Christ has revealed about God's eternal purposes and designs concerning fallen humanity, and the glorious and everlasting things prepared for the saints in the world to come — they see that these things are indeed so. Therefore these things are of great weight to them, and have a powerful effect on their hearts and influence over their lives, in some measure answering to their infinite importance.

That all true Christians have this kind of conviction of the truth of the things of the gospel is abundantly clear from the Holy Scriptures. A few passages among many: Matthew 16:15-17: 'He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."' John 6:68-69: 'You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.' John 17:6-8: 'I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world... Now they have come to know that everything

You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.' Acts 8:37: 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' 2 Corinthians 4:11-14: 'For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake... having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.' Together with verse 16: 'Therefore we do not lose heart.' And verse 18: 'while we look not at the things which are seen.' And 2 Corinthians 5:1: 'For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God.' And verses 6-8: 'Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord — for we walk by faith, not by sight — we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.' 2 Timothy 1:12: 'For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.' Hebrews 3:6: 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.' Hebrews 11:1: 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen' — together with that whole chapter. 1 John 4:13-16: 'By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the

love which God has for us.' 1 John 5:4-5: 'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?'

Truly gracious affections are therefore accompanied by the kind of conviction and persuasion of the truth of the things of the gospel, and the sight of their evidence and reality, that these and other scriptures describe.

Many religious affections are not accompanied by this kind of conviction of the mind. Many of the perceptions and ideas that some people call divine discoveries are affecting but not convincing. For a short time they may seem more persuaded of the truth of religion than they used to be, and may yield a quick assent — like many of Christ's hearers who believed for a while. But they have no thorough and effective conviction, and there is no great lasting change in them. It is not the case that whereas they previously did not grasp the reality of the great things of the gospel, they now see them in a new light as genuinely real and certain. Many people who have been greatly stirred by religious affections and think they have been converted go through the world no more convinced of the truth of the gospel than they were before — or at least no significantly more. They are not people who live under the influence and power of a realizing conviction of the infinite and eternal things the gospel reveals. If they were, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. Because their affections are not accompanied by a thorough conviction of the mind, they cannot be relied on at all. However much noise and show they make, it is like the

blaze of burning flax or the crackling of thorns — or like the promising blade that springs up quickly on rocky ground, but has no root and no depth of soil to sustain its life.

Some people, in a state of high affections and confident assurance of their good standing before God, have what they very mistakenly call 'seeing the truth of the Word of God' — and it is something very far from that. A scripture text comes to their minds suddenly and in an extraordinary way, directly declaring to them (as they suppose) that their sins are forgiven, that God loves them and will save them. Perhaps a chain of scripture texts comes one after another to the same effect, and they become convinced that it is true — meaning, they are confident that their sins are indeed forgiven and God loves them. They say they know it is so, and when the words of Scripture are suggested to them as if God is speaking those words directly to them with this meaning, they are ready to cry out: 'Truth! It is certainly so! The Word of God is true!' This they call seeing the truth of the Word of God. In reality, the whole of their faith amounts to nothing more than a strong confidence in their own good standing before God, and therefore a confidence that the words they suppose are telling them they are in a good standing are true. As was shown earlier, no scripture directly identifies any particular person as being in a good standing — it only reveals the qualifications of those who are in a good standing, and the matter can only be learned from Scripture by drawing that conclusion from those qualifications. So instead of being a real sight of the Word of God, this is a sight of nothing but a phantom — it is delusion through and through. To truly see the truth of the Word of God is to see the truth of the gospel — the glorious doctrine that the Word of God contains concerning God, Jesus Christ, the way of

salvation through Him, and the world of glory He has entered and purchased for all who believe. It is not a revelation that such and such particular persons are true Christians and will go to heaven. Therefore, affections that arise from no persuasion of the truth of God's Word beyond this kind of supposed confirmation arise from delusion and not from true conviction — and are themselves delusory and empty.

Even if a person's religious affections do arise from a strong persuasion of the truth of the Christian religion, those affections are no better unless the persuasion is a reasonable one — that is, a conviction founded on real evidence and on genuinely good grounds. People may have a strong persuasion that the Christian religion is true when that persuasion is built not on evidence at all, but entirely on upbringing and the opinions of others. Many Muslims are strongly persuaded of the truth of Islam because their fathers, neighbors, and nation believe it. A belief in the truth of the Christian religion built on the very same grounds as a Muslim's belief in Islam is the same kind of belief. Even though what is believed happens to be better, that does not make the belief itself better. Though the thing believed happens to be true, the belief is not owing to its being true but to upbringing. So the conviction is no better than a Muslim's conviction, and the affections flowing from it are no better in themselves than the religious affections of Muslims.

But even if a person's belief in Christian doctrines arises not merely from upbringing but actually from reasons and arguments that are offered in its support, it does not necessarily follow from that alone that their affections are truly gracious. For that to be the case, it is necessary not only that the belief their affections arise

from be reasonable, but also that it be a spiritual belief or conviction. No one will doubt that some natural people do yield a kind of assent of their judgment to the truth of the Christian religion based on rational proofs or arguments offered in its defense. Judas, without doubt, believed Jesus to be the Messiah based on what he saw and heard — and yet was a devil all along. In John 2:23-25 we read of many who believed in Christ's name when they saw the miracles He performed, and yet Christ knew that what was in them could not be depended on. Simon the Sorcerer believed when he saw the miracles and signs performed, yet remained 'in the gall of bitterness and the bondage of iniquity' (Acts 8:13, 23). And if such a belief or assent of the judgment exists in some natural people, no one can doubt that religious affections may arise from that assent — just as we read of some who believed for a while, were greatly moved, and received the word with joy.

It is clear that there is such a thing as a spiritual belief or conviction of the truth of the things of the gospel — a belief peculiar to those who are spiritual, who have been regenerated, and who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them as a vital principle through His holy influences. The conviction these people have does not differ from what natural people have merely in its accompanying qualities — that it is accompanied by good works. The belief itself is different: the assent and conviction of the mind is of a kind unique to those who are spiritual, something natural people are entirely without. This is as plain as anything in Scripture. John 17:8: 'They have believed that You sent Me.' Titus 1:1: 'According to the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness.' John 16:27: 'The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth

from the Father.' 1 John 4:15: 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.' 1 John 5:1: 'Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.' Verse 10: 'The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.'

What a spiritual conviction of the mind is, we can naturally determine from what has already been said about spiritual understanding. The conviction of the mind arises from the illumination of the understanding: making a right judgment about things depends on having a right perception or idea of those things. It follows, therefore, that a spiritual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel is a conviction that arises from having a spiritual view or perception of those things in the mind. This is also evident from Scripture, which often teaches that a saving belief in the reality and divinity of the things set forth to us in the gospel comes from the Spirit of God enlightening the mind to perceive rightly the nature of those things — unveiling them, revealing them, enabling the mind to see them as they are. Luke 10:21-22: 'I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.' John 6:40: 'For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life.' Here it is plain that true faith arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. John 17:6-8: 'I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world... Now they have come to know that everything

You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.' Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples — giving them a true perception and view of divine things — was the means by which they knew that Christ's doctrine was from God and that Christ Himself was from Him and sent by Him. Matthew 16:16-17: 'Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."' 1 John 5:10: 'The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.' Galatians 1:14-16: 'Being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood.'

If spiritual conviction of the divinity and reality of the things exhibited in the gospel is a conviction that arises from spiritual understanding of those things, then I have already shown what that is: a sense and taste of the divine, supreme, and holy excellence and beauty of those things. The mind is therefore spiritually convinced of the divinity and truth of the great things of the gospel when that conviction arises, either directly or indirectly, from such a sense or view of their divine excellence and glory as is there exhibited. This clearly follows from what has already been said, and Scripture states it plainly. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6: 'And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving

so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.' Together with the last verse of the preceding chapter, which introduces this: 'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3:18). Nothing could be more clear than that a saving belief of the gospel is here described by the apostle as arising from the mind's being enlightened to behold the divine glory of the things the gospel exhibits.

This view or sense of the divine glory and unequaled beauty of the things exhibited to us in the gospel convinces the mind of their divinity in two ways: directly, and more indirectly and remotely. First, a view of this divine glory directly convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, because this glory is itself a direct, clear, and all-conquering evidence of it — especially when it is clearly seen, or when this supernatural sense is given in any significant degree.

A person whose mind is directly convinced and assured of the divinity of the things of the gospel by a clear view of their divine glory has a reasonable conviction — his belief and assurance are altogether consistent with reason. The divine glory and beauty of divine things is itself real evidence of their divinity — the most direct and strong evidence there is. A person who truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme glory of divine things knows their divinity

intuitively, as it were. He does not merely argue that they are divine — he sees that they are divine. He sees in them the very thing in which divinity chiefly consists. For it is in this glory — so vastly and inexpressibly different from the glory of anything human or created — that the true nature of divinity most essentially lies. God is God, and is distinguished from all other beings and exalted above them, chiefly by His divine beauty, which is infinitely different from all other beauty. Those who see the stamp of this glory in divine things therefore see divinity in them — they see God in them — and so see them to be divine, because they see in them the thing that most truly defines what divinity is. In this way a soul may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of the things exhibited in the gospel. This does not mean the soul judges the doctrines of the gospel to be from God with no argument or reasoning at all — but it is without any long chain of arguments. The argument is just one, and the evidence is direct: the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel by a single step, and that step is the divine glory.

It would be very strange for any professing Christian to deny that there could be an excellence in divine things so transcendent, so far beyond what is found in anything else, that if it were seen it would unmistakably identify them as divine. We cannot reasonably doubt that things which are divine — things that belong to the supreme Being — are vastly different from things that are human. There is a godlike, lofty, and glorious excellence in them that so distinguishes them from what comes from human beings that the difference is beyond words. Such a difference, when seen, would carry the most convincing and satisfying persuasion that these things are what they are: namely, divine. Surely there is in the di-

vine Being a glory and excellence so infinitely distinctive that if it were seen, He could be recognized by it. It would be unreasonable, therefore, to deny that God can manifest this distinguishing excellence in the things by which He has been pleased to make Himself known, and that this distinguishing excellence can be clearly seen in those things. There are even natural excellencies that plainly reveal their subjects or authors to anyone who observes them. How different is the speech of a man of understanding from the speech of a small child! And how greatly distinguished is the speech of some men of great genius — such as Homer, Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison, and others — from that of many other capable men! There are no limits to the degrees of mental excellence that may be manifested in speech. But the manifestation of God's natural perfections in what He reveals of Himself may surely be unspeakably more distinguishing than the appearance of those small excellencies in which creatures differ from one another. A person familiar with human works, upon viewing the sun, knows it is no human creation. And it is reasonable to suppose that when Christ comes at the end of the world in the glory of His Father, He will appear with such ineffable manifestations of divinity that the most stubborn unbelievers will have no doubt that the One appearing is a divine Person. But above all, the manifestations of the moral and spiritual glory of the divine Being — which is the true beauty of divinity — carry their own evidence and assure the heart. Thus the disciples were assured that Jesus was the Son of God, for 'we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). When Christ appeared in the glory of His transfiguration to His disciples — with the outward glory visible to their physical eyes, which was a sweet and wonderful symbol of His

spiritual glory, together with the spiritual glory itself manifested to their minds — the display of glory was such as to assure them of His divinity perfectly and with good reason. This is evident from what one of them, the apostle Peter, says about it in 2 Peter 1:16-18: 'For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.' Peter calls the mountain holy because what was manifested to their minds there — and what most impressed and overwhelmed them — was the glory of Christ's holiness, the beauty of His moral excellence: or, as another of those disciples who witnessed it expressed it, 'His glory, full of grace and truth.'

This distinguishing glory of the divine Being finds its brightest manifestation in the things set forth to us in the gospel: the doctrines taught there, the Word spoken there, and the divine counsels, acts, and works revealed there. These things contain the clearest, most remarkable, and most distinctive revelations of the glory of God's moral perfections ever made to the world. If such a distinctive and evidential display of divine glory exists in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that it can be seen. What would prevent it from being seen? It is no argument that it cannot be seen simply because some people do not see it — even those who are sharp in worldly matters. If there are such ineffable and distinctive evidential excellencies in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that they are the kind that can only be perceived by the special influence and

enlightening of the Spirit of God. It takes uncommon mental capacity to discern the distinctive excellencies of the works of authors of great genius. The very things in Milton that appear flat and faulty to poor judges are, in the eyes of those with greater discernment and better taste, his unmatched excellencies. And if there is a book of which God is the author, it is most reasonable to suppose that the distinguishing glories of His Word are of a kind that the sin and corruption of human hearts — which more than anything else estranges people from God and makes the heart dull and insensible to anything in which the moral glory of the divine perfections consists — would hide from their sight. Therefore people will not see these beauties unless God is pleased to enlighten them and restore a holy taste to perceive and relish divine beauty.

This sense of the spiritual excellence and beauty of divine things also tends directly to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel, because many of the most important things declared in the gospel — hidden from the eyes of natural people — have their truth residing in, depending on, or flowing directly from this excellence. When the eyes are opened to behold the holy beauty and loveliness in divine things, a multitude of the most important doctrines of the gospel that depend on it — doctrines that all seem strange and dark to natural people — are seen to be true all at once. For example, through this sense the truth of what God's Word declares about the exceeding evil of sin becomes plain. The very eye that perceives the transcendent beauty of holiness necessarily sees, in the same act, the exceeding ugliness of sin. The same taste that relishes the sweetness of true moral good also tastes the bitterness of moral evil. Through this, a person sees his own sinfulness and wretchedness, for he now has a sense by which objects of this na-

ture can be perceived. So he sees the truth of what God's Word declares about the exceeding sinfulness of humanity — which he did not see before. He now sees the dreadful corruption of his heart and the desperate depravity of his nature in a new way, for his soul has been given a sense by which it can feel the pain of such a disease. This shows him the truth of what Scripture reveals about the corruption of human nature, original sin, the ruined and undone condition humanity is in, the need for a Savior, and the need for the mighty power of God to renew the heart and change the nature. By seeing the true excellence of holiness, people also see the glory of all the things that both reason and Scripture show to belong to the divine Being — for it has been shown that the glory of those things depends on this. Through this sense they see the truth of all that Scripture declares about God's glorious excellence and majesty, His being the fountain of all good, and the only true happiness of the creature. This in turn shows the mind the truth of what Scripture teaches about the evil of sin against so glorious a God, the just desert of the dreadful punishment sin brings, and the impossibility of any creature offering a satisfaction or sufficient atonement for what is so infinitely evil and heinous. This again shows the truth of what Scripture reveals about the necessity of a Savior to offer an atonement of infinite value for sin. And this sense of spiritual beauty enables the soul to see the glory of what the gospel reveals about the person of Christ — to see the exceeding beauty and dignity of His person as it appears in what the gospel exhibits of His words, works, acts, and life. This perception of the surpassing dignity of His person shows the truth of what the gospel declares about the value of His blood and righteousness, and therefore the infinite excellence of the offering He has made to

God for us, and its sufficiency to atone for our sins and bring us to God. In this way the Spirit of God reveals the way of salvation through Christ: the soul sees the fitness and suitableness of this way of salvation, the admirable wisdom of its design, and the perfect correspondence between the provision the gospel exhibits and our actual needs. With a sense of true divine beauty given to the soul, the soul discerns the beauty of every part of the gospel plan. This also shows the soul the truth of what God's Word declares about humanity's chief happiness — that it consists in holy exercises and enjoyments. This shows the truth of what the gospel declares about the unspeakable glory of the heavenly state. And what the Old Testament prophecies and the apostolic writings declare about the glory of the Messiah's kingdom becomes all plain — as does what Scripture teaches about the reasons and grounds of our duty. The truth of all these things revealed in Scripture, and many more that could be mentioned, appears to the soul only through the imparting of that spiritual taste of divine beauty that has been described — things that were all hidden from the soul before.

Beyond all this, the truth of everything Scripture says about experiential religion is also confirmed — because it is now experienced. This convinces the soul that the Author of the Scriptures was One who knew the human heart better than we know our own hearts, and who perfectly understood the nature of virtue and holiness. And the opening up, with such clarity, of a whole world of wonderful and glorious truth in the gospel — truth that was previously unknown and entirely beyond the view of a natural person, but now appearing clear and bright — has a powerful and irresistible influence on the soul, persuading it of the divinity of the gospel.

Unless people can arrive at a reasonable and solid persuasion and conviction of the truth of the gospel through its internal evidences — by a sight of its glory, as described — it is impossible for those who are unlearned and unfamiliar with history to have any thorough and effective conviction of it at all. Without this, they may see a great deal of probability for Christianity's truth. It may be reasonable for them to give much weight to what learned men and historians tell them, and what they are told may make the Christian religion appear very probable and credible — so much so that it would be unreasonable not to hold this opinion. But to have a conviction so clear, so evident, and so assuring as to move them to boldly sell everything — to confidently and fearlessly risk the loss of all things, to endure the most severe and prolonged torments, to trample the world underfoot, and to count all things as rubbish for Christ's sake — the evidence available from history alone is not sufficient. It is impossible for people who do not have a broad grasp of the historical record and the course of events across the ages to receive the full force of the arguments for the truth of Christianity drawn from history — enough to induce them to stake everything on it. After all that learned men have told them, countless doubts will remain in their minds. When pressed hard by some great trial of their faith, they will be ready to ask: How do I know this or that? How do I know when these historical accounts were written? Learned men tell me these accounts were well attested in their own day — but how do I know there were such attestations at the time? They tell me there is equal reason to believe these facts as any other facts reported from such a distance — but how do I know that other facts reported from those periods ever occurred? Those who do not have a broad view of the course

of historical events and the condition of humanity through the ages cannot clearly see the historical evidence for the truth of events in distant eras — endless doubts and uncertainties will remain.

But the gospel was not given only for learned people. At least nineteen out of twenty — if not ninety-nine out of a hundred — of those for whom the Scriptures were written are not capable of any certain or effective conviction of the divine authority of Scripture through the kinds of arguments that learned men employ. If those who have been raised in paganism must wait for a clear and certain conviction of the truth of Christianity until they have enough learning and acquaintance with history to clearly grasp the force of such arguments, it will make the evidence of the gospel immensely difficult for them to access and will make the spread of the gospel among them infinitely difficult. Miserable would be the condition of those in the nations and others who have recently expressed a desire to be instructed in Christianity, if they could come to no evidence of the truth of Christianity sufficient to move them to sell all for Christ in any other way than this.

It is unreasonable to suppose that God has provided for His people no more than probable evidences of the truth of the gospel. He has with great care abundantly provided and given them the most convincing, assuring, satisfying, and comprehensive evidence of His faithfulness in the covenant of grace — having, as David says, 'made a covenant, ordered in all things and sure.' It is therefore reasonable to suppose that He would at the same time ensure that equally great and clear evidence exists that this is His covenant and these are His promises — or, which is the same thing, that the Christian religion is true and the gospel is His

Word. Otherwise, the great assurances He has given of His faithfulness in the covenant — confirmed by His oath and variously established by seals and pledges — would be empty. For the evidence that the covenant is His is the very foundation on which all the force and effect of those other assurances rest. We may therefore conclude without doubt that God has given some kind of evidence that this covenant and these promises are His — evidence that goes beyond mere probability. He has provided grounds of assurance that, if we are not blind to them, produce a higher persuasion than any argument from history, human tradition, or similar sources — grounds accessible even to those unlearned and unfamiliar with history. This evidence provides good grounds for the highest and most complete assurance that human beings can have in any matter — consistent with the strong expressions the apostle uses in Hebrews 10:22: 'Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.' And Colossians 2:2: 'That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself.' It is reasonable to suppose that God would give the greatest evidence for things that are greatest and whose truth is most important to us — things of which we would most earnestly desire complete, unwavering, and perfect assurance if we are wise and acting rationally. But it is certain that such assurance cannot be attained, for the majority of those who live under the gospel, through arguments drawn from ancient traditions, historical records, and monuments.

And when we look at actual fact and experience, there is not the slightest reason to suppose that even one in a hundred sincere Christians who have given their all for Christ came to their conviction of the truth of the gospel this way — through historical arguments. Consider the many thousands who died as martyrs for Christ since the beginning of the Reformation, cheerfully enduring extreme torments out of confidence in the truth of the gospel. When we consider their circumstances and backgrounds, how few of them could we reasonably suppose ever came to their assured persuasion through such arguments — or for whom it would even have been possible to receive so full and strong an assurance through them! Many of them were women and children, and the greater part were ordinary people who could not read. Many had been raised in Catholic ignorance and darkness and had only recently come out of it. They lived and died in times when the arguments for the truth of Christianity from antiquity and history had been very incompletely developed. And in fact, it was only very recently that these arguments have been set forth in a clear and convincing light, even by learned men. Since that has been done, there have never been fewer genuine believers among those educated in the true religion. Unbelief has never been as widespread in any age as it is now — the very age in which these arguments are handled to their greatest advantage.

The true martyrs of Jesus Christ are not those who have simply held a strong opinion that the gospel of Christ is true, but those who have seen its truth — as the very name 'martyrs' or 'witnesses,' by which they are called in Scripture, implies. It is quite improper to call witnesses of the truth of something those who merely declare that they are very much of the opinion that it is true. Only

those are proper witnesses who can and do testify that they have seen the truth of what they assert. As John 3:11 says: 'We speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen.' John 1:34: 'I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.' 1 John 4:14: 'We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.' Acts 22:14-15: 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all people of what you have seen and heard.' The true martyrs of Jesus Christ are called His witnesses, and all the saints who by holy practice under great trials declare the faith that 'is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen' are called witnesses (Hebrews 11:1 and 12:1). This is because by their profession and practice they declare their assurance of the truth and divinity of the gospel, having had the eyes of their minds opened to see divinity in the gospel — to behold that unparalleled, ineffably excellent, and truly divine glory shining in it, which is altogether distinctive, evidential, and convincing. They may therefore truly be said to have seen God in it and to have seen that it is indeed divine, and so can speak as witnesses do — not merely saying that they think the gospel is divine, but saying that it is divine, giving it in as their testimony because they have seen it to be so. Doubtless Peter, James, and John, after they had seen the excellent glory of Christ on the mountain, would have been ready, when they came down, to speak as witnesses — positively declaring that Jesus is the Son of God, as Peter says they were eyewitnesses (2 Peter 1:16). And so all nations will be ready to declare this positively when they behold His glory at the day of judgment — though what will be universally seen then will be only

His natural glory, not His moral and spiritual glory, which is far more distinctively evidential. It must be noted, however, that among those who have a spiritual sight of the divine glory of the gospel there is a great variety in the degree of strength of faith, corresponding to a great variety in the degree of clearness of their views of this glory. Yet there is no true and saving faith, no spiritual conviction of the truth of the gospel, that has nothing at all of this manifestation of its internal evidence in some degree. The gospel of the blessed God does not go about begging for its evidence as much as some think — it has its highest and most proper evidence within itself. External arguments are not to be neglected — they are to be highly prized and valued, for they may be greatly useful in awakening unbelievers, bringing them to serious reflection, and confirming the faith of true saints. Indeed they may, in some respects, contribute to the producing of a saving faith in people. Yet what was said before remains true: there is no spiritual conviction of the mind except what arises from a perception of the spiritual beauty and glory of divine things. For, as has been observed, this perception or view tends to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel in two ways — directly and indirectly. Having already described how it does so directly, I now proceed

Second, to observe how a view of this divine glory convinces the mind of the truth of Christianity more indirectly.

First, it does so by removing the prejudices of the heart against the truth of divine things, so that the mind becomes open to the force of reasons offered in their support. The human mind is naturally full of hostility toward the doctrines of the gospel, which weakens the effect of the arguments that prove their truth and causes those arguments to lose their force. But when a person has

the divine excellence of Christian doctrines revealed to him, this destroys that hostility, removes the prejudices, purifies the reason, and causes it to become open and free. Hence there is a vast difference in the force that arguments have to persuade the mind. This explains the very different effect that Christ's miracles had in convincing the disciples compared to the scribes and Pharisees. The disciples did not have stronger reason or better developed intellects than the scribes and Pharisees — but their reason was purified, and the blinding prejudices under which the scribes and Pharisees labored were removed, by the sense they had of the excellence of Christ and His teaching.

Second, a sense of divine glory not only removes the hindrances of reason but positively strengthens it. It makes even speculative ideas more vivid. It focuses and engages the attention of the mind on these kinds of objects, causing it to perceive them more clearly and to see their mutual relationships more distinctly. The ideas themselves, which would otherwise be dim and obscure, have a light cast upon them by this means, and are impressed with greater force. The mind can therefore judge them more accurately — as a person who views objects on the face of the earth in the full light of the sun is in a far better position to discern them in their true forms, see their relationships, and observe the evidence of divine wisdom in their design, than someone viewing them in the dim light of stars or in twilight.

What has been said may help to some degree to explain the nature of a spiritual conviction of the truth and reality of divine things, and so to distinguish truly gracious affections from others — for gracious affections are always attended by such a conviction of the mind.

Before I leave this subject, however, it will be necessary to identify certain ways in which people are deceived on this point, and to note several things that are sometimes taken for a spiritual and saving belief in the truth of religion but are in fact something very different.

First, there is a degree of conviction of the truth of the great things of religion that arises from the common enlightening work of the Spirit of God. The more lively and vivid perception of the natural aspects of religion that people have when they are under convictions and common illuminations will produce some degree of conviction of the truth of divine things beyond what they had before they were thus enlightened. Through this they see manifestations of God's natural perfections — such as His greatness, power, and awesome majesty — in the revelation made in the Holy Scriptures, and this tends to convince the mind that this is the word of a great and terrible God. From the tokens of God's greatness and majesty in His word and works, of which they have a powerful sense through the common influence of the Spirit, they may have a much stronger conviction that these are indeed the word and works of a great invisible Being. The vivid sense of God's greatness that natural people may have tends to make them feel the great guilt that sin against such a God brings, and the dreadfulness of His wrath for sin. This tends to make them more readily and fully believe what Scripture reveals about another world and the extreme misery it threatens to bring upon sinners. And from the sense of the great natural good there is in the things of religion — which is sometimes given in common illuminations — people may be further persuaded of the truth of religion. Yet people may have all of this and still have no sense of the beauty and loveliness

of the moral and holy excellence that is in the things of religion, and therefore no spiritual conviction of their truth. But such convictions are sometimes mistaken for saving convictions, and the affections flowing from them for saving affections.

Second, the extraordinary impressions made on the imaginations of some people — through visions, strong sudden impulses, and suggestions that come to them as though they were seeing sights or hearing words spoken to them — may produce, and often do produce, a strong persuasion of the truth of invisible things. Though the general tendency of such things, in their final effect, is to draw people away from the Word of God, to cause them to reject the gospel, and to promote unbelief and atheism — yet for the moment they may produce, and often do produce, a confident persuasion of the truth of some things revealed in Scripture. However, their confidence is founded on delusion and is therefore worthless. For example: if an invisible agent suddenly and powerfully impresses on a person's imagination the appearance of a brilliant light and the glorious form of a person seated on a throne with great outward majesty and beauty, uttering remarkable words with force and energy — that person may conclude from this experience that invisible, spiritual beings exist, since he knows he had no hand in producing this extraordinary experience himself. He may also be confident that this was Christ whom he saw and heard speaking, and this may make him confident that there is a Christ, that Christ reigns on a throne in heaven as he saw, and that the words he heard spoken are true. In the same way, the false miracles of Roman Catholicism may, for the moment, produce in the minds of ignorant and deceived people a strong persuasion of the truth of many things declared in the New Testament. When images

of Christ in Catholic churches are by priestly deception made to appear before the people as though weeping, shedding fresh blood, moving, or speaking certain words — the people may truly believe that Christ Himself has worked a miracle. From this they may be confident that there is a Christ, that what they have been told about His death, sufferings, resurrection, ascension, and present rule of the world is true — since they may regard this miracle as certain evidence and something like visible proof of all these things. This may be the immediate effect of these lying wonders, even though their ultimate tendency is not to confirm that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh but rather to promote atheism. Even the dealings that Satan has with witches, and their repeated experiences of his immediate power, tend to convince them of the truth of some religious doctrines — in particular, the reality of an invisible world or realm of spirits, contrary to what the Sadducees taught. Satan's general tendency is toward delusion — but he may mix some truth with his lies so that his lies are not so easily discovered.

There are multitudes of people who are deceived by a counterfeit faith based on impressions made on their imagination in the way just described. They say they know there is a God because they have seen Him. They know that Christ is the Son of God because they have seen Him in His glory. They know that Christ died for sinners because they have seen Him hanging on the cross with His blood flowing from His wounds. They know there is a heaven and a hell because they have seen the misery of lost souls in hell and the glory of saints and angels in heaven — meaning certain outward representations strongly impressed on their imagination. They know that the Scriptures are the Word of God and that such and

such particular promises are His word because they have heard Him speak them — those words came to their minds suddenly and directly from God without any effort of their own.

Third, people may seem to have their belief in the truth of religious things greatly strengthened when the real basis of it is only a persuasion they have received that they personally have an interest in those things. They first, by some means or another, become confident that if there is a Christ and a heaven, those belong to them — and this self-interested conviction biases them in favor of believing those things are true. When they hear of the great and glorious things of religion, they hear with the assumption that all these things belong to them personally, and so they readily become confident that these things are real. It is very obvious how powerfully a person's self-interest and inclinations influence their judgments. As long as a natural person thinks that if there is a heaven and hell, the latter and not the former belongs to him — he will be very reluctant to believe in either one. But once he becomes persuaded that hell belongs only to other people and not to him, he can easily grant the reality of hell and criticize others for their senselessness in neglecting to escape it. And being confident that he is a child of God and that God has promised heaven to him, he may appear strong in his belief in the reality of heaven, and may have great zeal against the unbelief that denies it.

But I now move on to another distinguishing mark of gracious affections.

Sixth distinguishing sign: gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation.

Evangelical humiliation is a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, wretchedness, and odiousness, accompanied by an appropriate disposition of heart.

There is a distinction to be made between legal humiliation and evangelical humiliation. Legal humiliation is something people may experience while still in a state of nature, with no gracious affections — it is produced by the common influence of the Spirit of God assisting natural principles, especially natural conscience. Evangelical humiliation is unique to true saints — it is produced by the special influences of the Spirit of God implanting and exercising supernatural and divine principles. Legal humiliation comes from the mind being assisted to a greater sense of the natural properties of religious things — particularly the natural perfections of God, such as His greatness and terrible majesty, which were displayed to the congregation of Israel at Mount Sinai when the law was given. Evangelical humiliation comes from a sense of the transcendent beauty of divine things in their moral qualities. In legal humiliation, a sense of God's awesome greatness and natural perfections, and of the strictness of His law, convinces people that they are exceedingly sinful, guilty, and exposed to God's wrath — as it will convince wicked people and demons at the day of judgment. But they do not see their own odiousness on account of sin — they do not see the hateful nature of sin itself. This sense is given in evangelical humiliation, through a discovery of the beauty of God's holiness and moral perfection. In legal humiliation, people are made to feel that they are nothing before the great and terrible God, that they are undone, and entirely unable to help themselves — as wicked people will feel at the day of judgment. But they do not have the corresponding disposition of heart that consists in

a willingness to humble themselves and to exalt God alone. This disposition is given only in evangelical humiliation, when the heart is overcome and its inclination changed by a discovery of God's holy beauty. In legal humiliation the conscience is convinced — as the consciences of all will be most perfectly convinced at the day of judgment — but because there is no spiritual understanding, the will is not bent nor the inclination changed. This is done only in evangelical humiliation. In legal humiliation people are brought to despair of helping themselves; in evangelical humiliation they are brought to willingly deny and renounce themselves. In the former they are subdued and forced to the ground; in the latter they are sweetly moved to yield, and freely and joyfully to prostrate themselves at the feet of God.

Legal humiliation contains no spiritual good, nothing of the nature of true virtue. Evangelical humiliation, by contrast, is that in which the excellent beauty of Christian grace very much consists. Legal humiliation is useful as a means toward evangelical humiliation, just as a common knowledge of religious things is a necessary means toward spiritual knowledge. People may be legally humbled and yet have no humility — just as the wicked at the day of judgment will be thoroughly convinced that they have no righteousness, that they are altogether sinful and exceedingly guilty and justly exposed to eternal damnation, and will be fully aware of their own helplessness, without the slightest mortification of the pride of their hearts. The essence of evangelical humiliation consists in the kind of humility that befits a creature who is in itself exceedingly sinful, under a dispensation of grace. It consists in a

low view of oneself — as in oneself nothing, utterly contemptible and odious — accompanied by a mortification of the desire to exalt oneself, and a free giving up of one's own glory.

This is one of the most essential things in true religion. The entire structure of the gospel, everything belonging to the new covenant, and all of God's dealings with fallen humanity are designed to bring about this effect in the hearts of people. Those who lack this have no true religion, whatever profession they may make and however high their religious affections may be. Habakkuk 2:4: 'Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith' — that is, he will live by faith in God's righteousness and grace, not in his own goodness and excellence. God has abundantly made clear in His Word that this is what He especially looks for in His saints, and that nothing is acceptable to Him without it. Psalm 34:18: 'The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.' Psalm 51:17: 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.' Psalm 138:6: 'Though the Lord is exalted, yet He regards the lowly.' Proverbs 3:34: 'He gives grace to the afflicted.' Isaiah 57:15: 'For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."' Isaiah 66:1-2: 'Thus says the Lord, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool... But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."' Micah 6:8: 'He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' Matthew 5:3: 'Blessed

are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 18:3-4: 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' Mark 10:15: 'Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.' The centurion described in Luke 7 acknowledged that he was not worthy to have Christ enter under his roof and that he was not worthy to come to Him himself. See also the manner in which the sinful woman came to Christ in Luke 7:37: 'And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head.' She did not think the hair of her head — which is the natural crown and glory of a woman (1 Corinthians 11:15) — too fine to use to wipe the feet of Christ. Jesus graciously accepted her and said, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.' The Canaanite woman submitted to Christ when He said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs,' and in doing so she as good as acknowledged she was worthy to be called a dog — whereupon Christ said to her, 'O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish' (Matthew 15:26-27). The prodigal son said, 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men"' (Luke 15:18). See also Luke 18:9: 'And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt... The tax

collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.' Matthew 23:12: 'And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.' Colossians 3:12: 'So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of... humility.' Ezekiel 20:41, 43: 'As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples... There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done.' Ezekiel 36:26-27, 31: 'Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you... I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes... Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.' Ezekiel 16:63: 'So that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,' the Lord declares. Job 42:6: 'Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.'

Since we would make the Holy Scriptures our rule in judging the nature of true religion and our own religious condition and standing, we are greatly concerned to regard this humiliation as one of the most essential things belonging to true Christianity. It is the principal part of the great Christian duty of self-denial. That duty consists of two things: first, denying worldly inclinations and forsaking and renouncing worldly objects and pleasures; and sec-

ond, denying the natural impulse toward self-exaltation, renouncing one's own dignity and glory, and being emptied of oneself — so that a person freely and from his very heart, as it were, renounces himself and counts himself as nothing. This is what the Christian does in evangelical humiliation. The second of these is the greater and more difficult part of self-denial. Though the two always go together and one is never truly present where the other is absent, natural people can come far nearer to the first than to the second. Many hermits and recluses have abandoned — though without any true mortification — the wealth, pleasures, and common enjoyments of the world, while being far from renouncing their own dignity and righteousness. They never denied themselves for Christ — they only traded one lust to feed another, selling a fleshly lust to indulge a spiritual and prideful one. So they were never better off, and their latter end was worse than their beginning. They drove out one black devil to let in seven white ones that were worse than the first, though with a fairer face. It is almost beyond words how powerful the self-righteous, self-exalting disposition is in human nature by nature — and what a person will do and endure to feed and gratify it. Consider the lengths to which the Essenes and Pharisees among the Jews went in apparent self-denial, as did Catholics, many sects of heretics and enthusiasts among professing Christians, many Muslims, Pythagorean philosophers, and others among the pagans — all of it a sacrifice offered to the Moloch of spiritual pride and self-righteousness, all so that they might have something in which to exalt themselves before God and above their fellow creatures.

This humiliation is precisely what all the most impressive hypocrites — those who make the most splendid show of mortification to the world and high religious affection — utterly fail in. Were it not that Scripture insists on this so strongly as one of the most essential marks of true grace, one would almost be tempted to think that some of the pagan philosophers were truly gracious — given how bright an appearance of many virtues they displayed, along with great illuminations and inward fervor and elevation of mind, as though they were truly subjects of divine influence and heavenly communications.

It is true that many hypocrites make great pretenses to humility, as they do to other graces — and very often there is nothing they profess more highly. They work hard to display a great show of humility in their speech and behavior, but they generally make a poor job of it — though it looks glorious in their own eyes. They cannot figure out what humble speech and behavior actually is, or how to speak and act so that there is a genuine flavor of Christian humility in what they say and do. That sweet humble bearing and manner is beyond their art, since they are not led by the Spirit or naturally guided to behavior fitting holy humility by the energy of a lowly spirit within them. Therefore many of them have no other recourse but to frequently declare that they are humble — telling how they were humbled to the dust at such and such times, and using very self-deprecating expressions about themselves, such as: 'I am the least of all the saints,' 'I am a poor, vile creature,' 'I am not worthy of the least mercy or that God should look upon me,' 'Oh, I have a dreadfully wicked heart — my heart is worse than the devil's — oh, this cursed heart of mine.' Such expressions are very often used not with a broken heart, not with spiritual mourning, not

with the tears of her who washed Jesus's feet — not 'remembering and being ashamed and never opening one's mouth again because of one's shame, when God is pacified' as the expression is in Ezekiel 16:63. Instead they are used with a light manner, with smiles on the face, or with a Pharisaical display. We are expected to accept that these people are humble and making themselves vile simply on their own say-so — since there is nothing apparent in their manner of conduct or actions that has any flavor of humility. Many who are full of expressions of their own vileness still expect others to regard them as eminent and exceptional saints, as their due. It is dangerous for anyone so much as to hint the contrary or to treat them in any way other than as though they were among the foremost of Christians. Many who loudly bemoan their wicked hearts, their great shortcomings, their uselessness, and who speak as though they consider themselves the least of the saints — if a minister should seriously speak the same things to them privately, saying he feared they were very low and weak Christians and thought they had good reason to soberly examine their great defects and failings and how far they fall short of many others — would not be able to bear it. They would feel themselves greatly wronged, and there would be a real danger of a deep-seated prejudice against such a minister taking root in them.

There are some who talk extensively against legalistic doctrines, legalistic preaching, and a legalistic spirit, who have little understanding of what they are talking against. A legalistic spirit is a far more subtle thing than they imagine — it is too subtle for them. It lurks and operates and prevails in their hearts, and they are most notoriously guilty of it at the very same time they are denouncing it. So far as a person is not emptied of himself and of his

own righteousness and goodness in any form or shape, he is of a legalistic spirit. Pride in one's own righteousness, morality, holiness, affections, experiences, faith, humility, or any goodness whatsoever is a legalistic spirit. It was no pride in Adam before the fall to have a legalistic orientation, because his circumstances were such that he could seek acceptance through his own righteousness. But a legalistic spirit in a fallen sinful creature can be nothing other than spiritual pride — and conversely, a spiritually proud spirit is a legalistic spirit. There is no person living who is puffed up with pride in his own experiences and discoveries, and who shines in his own eyes on account of them, who does not actually trust in those experiences and make a righteousness out of them. However humble his language may be — speaking of his experiences as 'the great things God has done for me' and perhaps calling on others to glorify God for them — a person who is proud of his experiences is claiming something as his own, as though his experiences were a kind of personal distinction. And if he looks on them as his own distinction, he necessarily thinks God looks on them the same way — for he necessarily believes his own view of them to be correct, and therefore judges that God's view matches his. He inevitably imagines that God regards his experiences as a mark of distinction in him, just as he himself does — that he shines in God's eyes as he does in his own. And so he trusts in something that is inherent in him to make him shine in God's sight and commend him to God. With this confidence he goes before God in prayer; this leads him to expect much from God; this makes him think that Christ loves him and is willing to clothe him with His righteousness, because he supposes that Christ is pleased with his experiences and graces. This is a high degree of living on his own

righteousness — and such persons are on the high road to hell. Poor deluded wretches, who think they shine so brightly in God's eyes, when they are a smoke in His nostrils — and many of them are more offensive to Him than the most morally corrupt person who makes no pretense to religion at all! This is what it truly means to live on one's experiences — as opposed to those who only use their spiritual experiences as evidence of a state of grace, and in that way receive hope and comfort from them.

There is a kind of person who loudly denounces works and exalts faith in opposition to works, who sets himself up as a truly gospel-centered person in contrast to those of a legalistic spirit, and who makes a fair show of advancing Christ and the gospel and the way of free grace — and yet who is in fact one of the greatest enemies of the gospel way of free grace and one of the most dangerous opponents of pure, humble Christianity.

There is a pretended great humiliation, a supposed deadness to the law and emptying of self, which is in reality one of the most inflated and self-exalting things in the world. Some people have made a great profession of experiencing a thorough work of the law in their hearts and of being fully freed from dependence on works — yet their conduct has displayed a more self-righteous spirit than anything I have ever had occasion to observe. Some who think themselves completely emptied of self, and are confident they are humbled in the dust, are as full as they can be with pride in their own humility and are lifted up to heaven with an exalted opinion of their abasement. Their humility is a swelling, conceited, confident, showy, noisy, presumptuous humility. It seems to be the nature of spiritual pride to make people vain about and eager to display their humility. This is evident in that firstborn of

pride among humanity — the one who would be called His Holiness, the man of sin, who exalts himself above all that is called God or worshiped. He styles himself Servant of Servants, and to make a show of humility, washes the feet of a group of poor men at his inauguration.

For a person to be truly emptied of himself, to be poor in spirit, and broken in heart, is quite another thing — with quite different effects — than many people imagine. It is astonishing how greatly many are deceived about themselves in this matter, imagining themselves most humble when they are most proud, and when their behavior is in fact the most arrogant. The deceitfulness of the human heart appears in nothing so clearly as in spiritual pride and self-righteousness. The subtlety of Satan reaches its height in how he manages people with respect to this sin. Perhaps one reason for this is that here he has the most experience — he knows how it comes in, he is familiar with its secret springs, for it was his own sin. Experience gives a vast advantage in leading souls, whether in good or evil.

Though spiritual pride is so subtle and concealed a sin, and commonly appears under the guise of great humility, there are two things by which it may — perhaps universally and certainly — be detected and identified.

The first sign of spiritual pride is this: a person under the influence of this condition tends to think highly of his own religious attainments in comparison to others. He naturally falls into thinking of himself as an eminent saint — as one who stands very high among God's people and has unusually clear and great spiritual experiences. That is the secret language of his heart. Luke 18:11: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people.' Isaiah 65:5: 'I

am holier than you.' Such people are inclined to push themselves forward among God's people and to assume a leading position as though it naturally and unquestionably belonged to them. They naturally do what Christ forbids in Luke 14:7 — they take the highest room. They do this by assuming the role of guides and directors: they are confident they are 'a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature' (Romans 2:19-20). It is natural for them to take for granted that teaching and leading in religious matters belongs to them, and so they love to be called 'Rabbi' — that is, Teacher — by others, just as the Pharisees did (Matthew 23:6). They expect others to look up to them and defer to them as authorities in religious matters.

But the person whose heart is under the power of Christian humility has an opposite disposition. If the Scriptures are to be trusted at all, such a person tends to think his own religious attainments relatively low and to consider himself among the lesser saints. Humility — true lowliness of mind — disposes people to think others better than themselves. As Philippians 2:3 says: 'With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.' Therefore humble people are inclined to think the lowest place belongs to them, and their inward disposition naturally leads them to obey the Savior's instruction in Luke 14:10. It does not come naturally to them to take on the role of teacher. On the contrary, they are disposed to think they are not the right person for it and that others are better suited — as was the case with Moses and Jeremiah (Exodus 3:11; Jeremiah 1:6), even though they were eminent saints of great knowledge. It is not natural for them to think that teaching belongs to them — rather, they think they should be taught. They are far more eager to listen and receive instruction

from others than to speak to others. As James 1:19 says: 'Be quick to hear, slow to speak.' And when they do speak, it is not natural for them to speak with a bold and commanding manner — humility inclines them rather to speak with reserve. As Hosea 13:1 says: 'When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel.' They do not naturally assume authority or take on the role of chief directors and leaders — but are rather inclined to be subject to others. James 3:1-2: 'Let not many of you become teachers.' 1 Peter 5:5: 'All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.' Ephesians 5:21: 'Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.'

Some people's experiences naturally incline them to think highly of their experiences, and they often speak of their experiences as very great and extraordinary — freely talking about 'the great things they have encountered.' This may be said and meant in a good sense. In one sense, every degree of saving mercy is a great thing: it is indeed great — infinitely great — for God to bestow even the smallest crumb of the children's bread on such dogs as we are by nature. And the more humble a person is who hopes God has granted such mercy to him, the more inclined he will be to call it 'a great thing he has encountered' in this sense. But if by 'great things they have experienced' they mean comparatively great spiritual experiences — greater than others' experiences, beyond what is ordinary — which is evidently often the case, then to say 'I have encountered great things' is the same as saying 'I am an eminent saint with more grace than ordinary.' For to have great experiences, if the experiences are true and worth speaking of, is the same as having great grace. There is no true experience except the exercise of grace, and the degree of true experience corresponds

exactly to the degree of grace and holiness. People who speak this way about their experiences, when they give an account of them, expect that others will admire them. They do not regard this kind of talk about their experiences as boasting, nor do they see it as a sign of pride — because, they say, they know it was not they who did it; it was free grace; these are the great things God has done for them; they are merely acknowledging the great mercy God has shown them and not making light of it. But this is exactly how the Pharisee in Luke 18 behaved: he gave God the credit in words for making him different from other men — 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people,' he said. The fact that they verbally ascribe to the grace of God the reason they are holier than other saints does not cancel out their eagerness to think so highly of their own holiness — it is in itself certain evidence of the pride and vanity of their minds. If they were under the influence of a humble spirit, their religious attainments would not shine so brightly in their own eyes, and they would not spend so much time admiring their own beauty. The Christians who are truly the most eminent saints — and therefore have the most excellent experiences — 'humble themselves as a little child' (Matthew 18:4). They look on themselves as mere children in grace, their attainments as the attainments of babes in Christ, and they are astonished and ashamed at how little they love, how little they are thankful, and how small their knowledge of God is. When Moses had been speaking with God on the mountain and his face shone so brightly that it dazzled others' eyes, 'he did not know that his face was shining.' Some people go by the name of 'high professors,' and some even own the label for themselves — but the eminently humble saints who will shine most brightly in heaven are not at all inclined to make such

high professions. I do not believe that any eminent saint in the world is a 'high professor.' Such a saint is far more likely to profess himself the least of all saints and to think that every other saint's attainments and experiences are higher than his.

Such is the nature of true grace and spiritual light that they naturally incline the saints in their present state to see their grace and goodness as small and their remaining sinfulness as great. Those who have the most grace and spiritual light of anyone in this world have the most of this disposition. This will be abundantly clear to anyone who soberly and carefully weighs the nature and reason of things and considers what follows.

Grace and holiness are rightly called small when they are small in comparison to what they ought to be. And this is exactly how they appear to a truly gracious person — for such a person keeps his eye on the standard of his duty. Conformity to that standard is what he aims at; it is what his soul strains and reaches after; it is by that standard that he evaluates and judges what he does and what he has. To a gracious soul — especially to one who is eminently gracious — holiness that is far less than it ought to be appears small. If his holiness appears to him to be at a vast distance from the standard, it naturally appears contemptible in his eyes and not worthy of being mentioned as any beauty or loveliness in him. This is similar to how a hungry person naturally regards the food set before him as a small amount — a little thing not worth mentioning — when it is nothing compared to his appetite. Or like the child of a great king who is jealous for his father's honor: observing the respect people show his father, he naturally sees even

that honor and respect as very little and not worth remarking on, when it is nothing compared to what the dignity of his father deserves.

True grace and spiritual light open to a person's view the infinite reason he has to be holy in the highest degree. The more grace he has, the more clearly this is seen. He gains a greater sense of the infinite excellence and glory of the divine Being, of the infinite dignity of the person of Christ, and of the boundless length and breadth and depth and height of Christ's love to sinners. As grace increases, the field opens more and more to a wider and more distant view, until the soul is overwhelmed by the vastness of the object. The person is astonished to think how much he ought to love this God and this glorious Redeemer who has so loved sinful humanity — and how little he actually does. And so the more he perceives, the more strikingly small his grace and love appear. He is therefore all the more ready to think that others must surpass him. Marveling at the smallness of his own grace, he can scarcely believe that such a strange thing happens to other saints as well. It seems inconceivable to him that someone who is truly a child of God and has actually received the saving benefits of Christ's unspeakable love should love so little. He tends to regard it as a peculiarity of his own case — a strange and exceptional instance — because he sees only the outside of other Christians but he sees his own inside.

The reader may raise an objection here: love to God genuinely increases in proportion to the knowledge of God — so how could an increase of knowledge in a saint make his love appear smaller in comparison to what is known? The answer is this: although grace and love to God in the saints do correspond to the degree of knowl-

edge or sight of God, they are not proportional to the object as it is seen and known. When something of God is opened to the soul's sight, the soul is convinced of far more than is actually seen. What is seen is wonderful, and that sight carries with it a strong conviction of something vastly beyond that is not yet directly seen. So at the same moment, the soul is astonished both at how little it knows and at how little it loves. Just as in a spiritual view the soul is convinced of infinitely more in the object that still lies beyond its sight, so it is also convinced of how much more the soul is capable of knowing if the clouds and darkness were removed. This causes the soul, even in the enjoyment of a spiritual view, to deeply lament its spiritual ignorance and lack of love, and to long and reach after more knowledge and more love.

The grace and love of God in the most eminent saints in this world is truly very small compared to what it ought to be. The highest love that anyone attains to in this life is poor, cold, exceedingly low, and not worthy of mention in comparison to what our obligations appear to require — when we consider two things together. First: the reason God has given us to love Him, in the manifestations He has made of His infinite glory in His Word and works, and particularly in the gospel of His Son and what He has done for sinful humanity through Him. Second: the capacity of the human soul — through the intellectual faculties God has given it — to see and understand the reasons God has given us to love Him. How small indeed is the love of the most eminent saint on earth in comparison to what these two things together require! Grace tends to make people aware of this — especially eminent grace — for grace is of the nature of light and brings truth into view. Therefore the person who has much grace perceives far more clearly than

others how high his love ought to rise, and he sees far better than others how little of the way he has come toward that height. Measuring his love against the full height of his duty, it therefore appears to him astonishingly small and low.

The eminent saint, with such a conviction of how greatly he ought to love God, is shown not only the smallness of his grace but the greatness of his remaining corruption. To judge how much corruption or sin remains in us, we must measure by the height to which the standard of our duty extends. The whole of the distance we fall short of that height is sin — for falling short of duty is sin, otherwise our duty is not really our duty. The more we fall short of our duty, the more sin we have. Sin is simply the disagreement of a moral agent with the law or rule of his duty. The degree of sin is therefore to be judged by the rule: as much disagreement with the rule, so much sin, whether it is a matter of deficiency or excess. Therefore, if in their love to God people do not come even halfway to the height that duty requires, they have more corruption in their hearts than grace — because there is more goodness missing than is present, and everything that is missing is sin. This is a shameful deficiency, and it appears so to the saints — especially to eminent saints. It appears exceedingly shameful to them that Christ should be loved so little and thanked so little for His dying love. In their eyes it is hateful ingratitude.

Increasing grace also tends in another way to cause the saints to see their deformity as vastly greater than their goodness. It not only tends to convince them that their corruption is much greater than their goodness — which is indeed the case — but it also tends to make the ugliness of even the smallest sin, or the smallest degree of corruption, appear so great as to vastly outweigh all the

beauty found in their highest holiness. For this too is indeed the case. The smallest sin against an infinite God carries infinite ugliness and hatefulness in it, but the highest degree of holiness in a creature does not carry infinite loveliness. Therefore its loveliness is nothing in comparison to the ugliness of the smallest sin. That every sin has infinite ugliness and hatefulness in it is clearly demonstrable, because the evil, wrongness, and hatefulness of sin consists in violating an obligation — being or doing contrary to what we should be or do, contrary to what we are obligated to. Therefore the greater the obligation that is violated, the greater the wrongness and hatefulness of the violation. Our obligation to love and honor any being is surely proportional to that being's loveliness and worthiness to be loved and honored by us — these are the same thing. We are surely under greater obligation to love a more lovely being than a less lovely one. And if a being is infinitely lovely and worthy of our love, then our obligations to love Him are infinitely great — and therefore whatever is contrary to this love contains infinite wrongness, ugliness, and unworthiness. On the other hand, with respect to our holiness or love to God, there is no infinite worth in it. The sin of the creature against God is guilty and hateful in proportion to the distance between God and the creature — the greatness of the one sinned against and the smallness and inferiority of the sinner make the sin worse. But the opposite is true regarding the worth of the creature's reverence toward God: it is worthless, and not worth much, in proportion to the smallness of the subject. The greater the distance between God and the creature, the less worthy the creature's response is of God's notice or regard. The greater degree of superiority increases the obligation on the inferior to honor the superior, and therefore makes the lack

of honor more hateful. But the great degree of inferiority diminishes the worth of the inferior's response, because the more inferior he is, the less worth he has, and the less he can offer — for he can offer no more than himself in offering his best love and reverence. Therefore as he is small and of little worth, so is his response of little worth. The more a person has of true grace and spiritual light, the more things appear to him this way. He appears to himself infinitely ugly because of sin, and the goodness found in his grace and experiences appears ever smaller in proportion. For indeed it is nothing compared to the infinite — it is less than a drop compared to the ocean, for the finite bears no proportion at all to the infinite. But the more a person has of spiritual light, the more things appear to him as they truly are. Hence it is abundantly clear that true grace is of such a nature that the more a person has of it — alongside remaining corruption — the less does his goodness and holiness appear in proportion to his ugliness: not only to his past ugliness, but to his present ugliness, in the sin that now appears in his heart and in the shameful deficiencies of his highest affections and brightest experiences.

The nature of many high religious affections and supposed great discoveries in many people I have known is to hide and cover over the corruption of their hearts — to make it seem to them as if all their sin were gone, leaving them with no complaints of any hateful evil remaining. This is a sure and certain evidence that their supposed discoveries are darkness and not light. It is darkness that hides a person's corruption and deformity, but light let into the heart exposes it — searching it out in its secret corners and bringing it plainly into view, especially that penetrating, all-searching light of God's holiness and glory. It is true that saving

discoveries may for the moment hide corruption in one sense: they restrain its outward active expressions, such as malice, envy, greed, lust, and complaining. But they bring corruption to light in what is missing — there is not more love, not more humility, not more thankfulness. These deficiencies appear most hateful in the eyes of those who are most actively exercising grace, and they are very burdensome, causing the saints to cry out over their spiritual barrenness and their odious pride and ingratitude. And whatever outward expressions of corruption arise at any time and mix themselves with eminent acts of grace, grace will greatly magnify the view of them and make their appearance far more horrible and grievous.

The more eminent the saints are, and the more of heaven's light they have in their souls, the more they appear to themselves as the most eminent saints in this world appear to the saints and angels in heaven. How can we reasonably suppose the most eminent saints on earth appear to those in heaven, if seen in any other way than covered over with the righteousness of Christ — their deformities swallowed up and hidden in the radiance of His abundant glory and love? How can we suppose our most fervent love and praise appear to those who behold the beauty and glory of God without any veil? How does our highest thankfulness for the dying love of Christ appear to those who see Christ as He is — who know as they are known and see the glory of the person of Him who died and the wonders of His dying love without any cloud or darkness? And how do those in heaven regard even the deepest reverence and humility with which creatures on earth approach the infinite Majesty they behold? Do such responses appear great to them, or even worthy of the names 'reverence' and 'humility,' in those they

see to be at such an infinite distance from the great and holy God in whose glorious presence they stand? The reason the highest attainments of the saints on earth appear so insignificant to those in heaven is that they dwell in the light of God's glory and see God as He is. And it is so with the saints on earth in proportion as they grow in grace — as they see more of God, the more they share this perspective.

I do not mean that the saints on earth always have the worst opinion of themselves when they are most actively exercising grace. In many respects it is otherwise. With respect to the active expressions of corruption, they may appear to themselves freest and best when grace is most active, and worst when the exercise of grace is at its lowest. And when they compare themselves at different times, they may know, when grace is in lively exercise, that it is better with them than it was before — though during a previous period they did not see as much badness as they see now, looking back. When they afterward decline again in the state of their minds, they may know that they have declined, and may have a new argument of their great remaining corruption and a rational conviction of a greater sinfulness than they saw before. They may also have more of a sense of guilt and a kind of legal sense of their sinfulness by far than when they were in the lively exercise of grace. But it is nonetheless true and demonstrable from the considerations stated above that the children of God never have so much of a sensible and spiritual conviction of their deformity, and so great and sharp and humbling a sense of their present vileness and odiousness, as when they are highest in the exercise of true and pure grace. And they are never more disposed to place themselves low among Christians than then. Thus 'he who is greatest in

the kingdom' — the most eminent in the church of Christ — is the same one who 'humbles himself as a little child,' according to the great saying of Christ in Matthew 18:4.

A true saint may know that he has some true grace, and the more grace there is the more easily it is known, as was observed and shown earlier. But it does not follow that an eminent saint easily recognizes himself as an eminent saint in comparison with others. I will not deny that it is possible for a person who has much grace and is an eminent saint to know it. But he will not be inclined to know it — it will not be obvious to him. That he is better than others and has higher experiences and attainments is not a leading thought — not something that readily suggests itself from time to time. It lies far out of sight and off the main path of his thinking. He must work hard to convince himself of it. It takes a strong exercise of reason and a high degree of rigor and care in reasoning to bring himself to this conviction. And even if he is rationally convinced by a very careful comparison of his own experiences with the apparently low degrees of grace in some other saints, it will hardly seem real to him that he has more grace than they. He will be apt to lose the conviction he has worked to obtain. It will not seem natural to him to act on the assumption that he is more advanced. This may be laid down as an infallible test: a person who is inclined to think of himself as a very eminent saint in comparison with others — much distinguished in Christian experience — in whom this is a ready thought that rises of itself and naturally presents itself, is certainly mistaken. He is no eminent saint but is under the strong dominance of a proud and self-righteous spirit. And if this is habitual with him — the consistent and pre-

vailing temper of his mind — he is no saint at all and has not the least degree of any true Christian experience, as surely as the Word of God is true.

Experiences that tend in this direction — that consistently produce the effect of filling the person who has them with a high conceit of those very experiences — are certainly empty and delusory. Supposed discoveries that naturally puff up a person with admiration of the greatness of his discoveries and fill him with the conviction that he has now seen and knows more than most other Christians have nothing of true spiritual light in them. All true spiritual knowledge is of such a nature that the more a person has of it, the more he is aware of his own ignorance — as is clear from 1 Corinthians 8:2: 'If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.' Agur, when he had a great discovery of God and a sense of the wonderful height of God's glory and His marvelous works — crying out of His greatness and incomprehensibility — had at the same time the deepest sense of his own dull ignorance and regarded himself the most ignorant of all the saints. Proverbs 30:2-4: 'Surely I am more stupid than any man, and I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!'

For a person to be highly conceited about his spiritual and divine knowledge is to be wise in his own eyes, if anything is. This falls under the prohibitions of Proverbs 3:7: 'Do not be wise in your own eyes.' And Romans 12:16: 'Do not be wise in your own es-

timation.' And it brings people under the condemnation of Isaiah 5:21: 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.' Those who are wise in their own eyes are among the least likely of anyone in the world to receive real benefit. Experience confirms the truth of Proverbs 26:12: 'Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.'

To this some may raise an objection: the psalmist, when we must suppose he was in a holy frame of mind, speaks of his knowledge as eminently great — greater than that of other saints — in Psalm 119:99-100: 'I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.'

To this I offer two answers.

First, no restriction can be placed on what the Spirit of God may reveal to a prophet, for the benefit of the church, when speaking or writing under immediate inspiration. The Spirit of God may reveal to such a person, and direct him to declare to others, secret things that would otherwise be hard or impossible for him to discover on his own. He may reveal mysteries beyond the reach of the person's reason, or things in distant places he cannot see, or future events he could not know or declare apart from an extraordinary revelation. So the Spirit of God might have revealed to David this particular benefit he had received through meditating much on God's testimonies, and used David as His instrument to record it for the benefit of others — to stir them up to the same discipline and the same means of gaining knowledge. Nothing can be concluded about the natural tendency of the ordinary gracious influences of the Spirit of God from what David declares about his dis-

tinguishing knowledge under the extraordinary influence of God's Spirit — where the Spirit was immediately dictating the divine mind to him through inspiration and using David as His instrument to write what He pleased for the benefit of the church. We cannot reasonably argue that it is the natural tendency of grace to incline people to curse others and to wish the most dreadful misery upon them, just because David, writing under inspiration, often calls curses down on others and prays for terrible things to come upon them.

Second, it is not certain that the knowledge David speaks of here is the spiritual knowledge in which holiness fundamentally consists. It may be that he is speaking of the greater revelation God gave him of the Messiah and the things of His coming kingdom, and the far clearer and more extensive knowledge he had of the mysteries and doctrines of the gospel than others had — knowledge given as a reward for keeping God's testimonies. In this, the book of Psalms makes it evident that David far surpassed all who had come before him.

The second infallible sign of spiritual pride is that such persons are inclined to think highly of their humility. False experiences are commonly accompanied by a counterfeit humility. And it is the very nature of counterfeit humility to be highly conceited of itself. False religious affections generally tend — especially when they are raised to a great height — to make people think their humility is great, and accordingly to pay much attention to their great attainments in this area and to admire them. But genuinely gracious affections — I do not hesitate to say it — always tend in the opposite direction and universally produce the opposite effect in those who have them. They do make such people keenly aware of how much

reason they have to be deeply humbled, and they cause them to earnestly thirst and long after humility. But they cause the humility they have already attained to appear small, and their remaining pride to appear great and exceedingly repulsive.

The reason why a proud person is inclined to think his humility great, while a truly humble person thinks his humility small, can be easily understood by considering this: people naturally judge the degree of their own humiliation by measuring it from what they regard as their rightful status or proper dignity. What counts as great humiliation in one person may be no humiliation at all in another, because the degree of honor or standing in which each person properly stands is very different. For a great man to stoop down to fasten the sandal of another great man who is his equal, or to wash his feet, would be noticed as an act of lowering himself — and he, being aware of his own dignity, would see it that way himself. But if a poor slave is seen stooping to untie the shoes of a great prince, no one would take any notice of this as an act of humiliation in him or as a sign of any great degree of humility. Nor would the slave himself, unless he were absurdly proud and ridiculously conceited about himself. And if, having done it, the slave were then to show in his words and manner that he thought his abasement great and had his mind much occupied with it as evidence of his great humility, everyone would cry out at him: Who do you think you are, to imagine that what you did was such a profound act of humiliation? This would demonstrate plainly that the slave was swollen with a high degree of pride and vanity of mind — as clearly as if he had said outright, 'I think I am someone of great importance.' The matter is no less plain when worthless, vile, and contemptible worms of the dust are inclined to put such an inter-

pretation on their acts of abasement before God — thinking it a sign of great humility that, in their religious affections, they find themselves willing to acknowledge how mean and unworthy they are and to conduct themselves as befits such inferior creatures. The very reason why such outward acts and inward exercises look like great abasement to such a person is that he has a high opinion of himself. If he thought of himself more accurately, these things would appear nothing to him and not worth admiring as humility. He would rather be astonished at his pride — that one so infinitely contemptible and vile is brought no lower before God. When he says in his heart, 'This is a great act of humiliation — it is certainly a sign of great humility in me that I should feel this way and act this way,' his real meaning is: 'This is great humility for me, for such a person as I am — so considerable and worthy.' He considers how low he has now been brought, compares it with the height of dignity on which he in his heart believes he properly stands, the distance appears very great, and he calls the whole thing pure humility and admires it as such. But in the person who is truly humble and genuinely sees his own vileness and loathsomeness before God, the distance appears in the other direction entirely. When he is brought lowest of all, it does not appear to him that he has been brought below his proper station — it appears that he has not yet come to it. He still appears to himself to be vastly above it. He longs to get lower, to come to his proper place — but he sees himself still at a great distance from it. And this distance he calls pride. Therefore pride appears great to him, not humility. Although he has been brought much lower than he used to be, it does not seem to him worthy of the name humiliation — for one so infinitely mean and detestable to come down to a place that, though lower

than what he formerly assumed, is still vastly higher than what is proper for him. Just as people would hardly call it humility in a contemptible slave who formerly fancied himself a prince to have his spirit brought down far enough to accept the station of a nobleman — when that station is still so far above what rightly belongs to him.

All people in the world, in judging the degree of humility shown by themselves or others in any particular act, consider two things: the actual degree of dignity in which the person stands, and the degree of the lowering involved and its relation to that actual dignity. Thus complying with the same lowly position or lowly act may be evidence of great humility in one person but of little or no humility in another. But truly humble Christians have such a low opinion of their own actual dignity that all their self-abasement, when measured in relation to and compared with that dignity, appears very small to them. It does not seem to them any great humility, or any abasement worth making much of, for such poor, vile, abject creatures as they are to lie at the feet of God.

The degree of humility is to be judged by the degree of abasement in relation to the degree of cause for abasement. But the person who is truly and eminently humble never thinks his humility is great, given the cause for it. The cause why he should be humbled appears so great, and the abasement he has actually attained in his heart appears to fall so far short of it, that he takes far more notice of his pride than of his humility.

Everyone who has had dealings with souls under conviction of sin knows that those who are deeply convicted of sin are not inclined to think of themselves as deeply convicted. The reason is this: people judge the degree of their own conviction of sin by two

things considered together — the degree of sense they have of their guilt and pollution, and the degree of cause they have for such a sense, given how genuinely sinful they are. For some people, it is no evidence of great conviction of sin to think themselves very sinful beyond most others, because they truly are so — very plainly and obviously. Therefore far less conviction of sin may incline such a person to think so than would be required in another case. He would have to be very blind indeed not to be aware of it. But the person who is truly under great conviction of sin naturally thinks this is his situation. It seems to him that the cause he has to feel guilt and pollution is greater than others have — and therefore he attributes his sensitivity to this to the greatness of his sin, not to the greatness of his sensitivity. A person under great conviction naturally thinks of himself as one of the greatest sinners in reality, and also that this is very plain and obvious — because the greater his convictions are, the plainer and more obvious it seems to him. It therefore necessarily seems to him so plain and easy to see that it might be seen without much conviction at all. A person is under great conviction whose conviction is great in proportion to his sin. But no person who is truly under great conviction thinks his conviction is great in proportion to his sin. If he does, it is a certain sign that he inwardly thinks his sins are small — and if that is the case, it is certain evidence that his conviction is small. This, by the way, is the main reason why people undergoing a work of humiliation are not aware of it at the time.

And just as it is with conviction of sin, so by the same logic it is with a person's conviction or awareness of his own meanness and vileness, his own blindness, his own weakness, and all that low view of himself that a Christian has in the exercise of evangelical

humiliation. Therefore in a high degree of this humiliation, the saints are never inclined to think their sense of their own meanness, filthiness, and weakness is great — because it never appears great to them when they consider the cause for it.

An eminent saint is not inclined to think of himself as eminent in anything. All his graces and experiences are ready to appear to him comparatively small — but especially his humility. There is nothing belonging to Christian experience and true godliness that is so far out of his sight as his humility. He is a thousand times quicker to see his pride than his humility. Pride he easily discerns and tends to take much notice of, but he can hardly discern his humility. The deluded hypocrite, by contrast, who is under the power of spiritual pride, is blind to nothing so much as his pride, and quick to see nothing so much as the appearances of humility in himself.

The humble Christian is more inclined to find fault with his own pride than with other people's. He is inclined to put the best possible interpretation on others' words and behavior, and to think that no one is as proud as himself. But the proud hypocrite is quick to see the speck in his brother's eye in this regard while seeing nothing of the plank in his own. He is very often much occupied in crying out about other people's pride and finding fault with their clothing and manner of living — and is ten times as disturbed by his neighbor's ring or ribbon as by all the filthiness of his own heart.

From the disposition of hypocrites to think highly of their own humility, it follows that counterfeit humility is eager to put itself on display. Those who have it are inclined to speak much of their humiliations, to describe them in strong terms, and to put on a

great outward show of humility in affected looks, gestures, a manner of dressing poorly, or some contrived peculiarity. This was the way of the false prophets of old (Zechariah 13:4), and of the hypocritical Jews (Isaiah 57:5), and Christ tells us it was the way of the Pharisees (Matthew 6:16). But with true humility it is the opposite: those who have it are not inclined to use eloquent language to describe it or to speak of the degree of their abasement in strong terms. True humility does not seek to display itself through any distinctive outward poverty of dress or manner of living — consistent with what is implied in Matthew 6:17: 'But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face.' And Colossians 2:23: 'These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body.' Nor is true humility loud or boisterous — Scripture represents it as the opposite. Ahab, when he had a visible humility — a resemblance of true humility — 'walked softly' (1 Kings 21:27). A penitent in the exercise of true humiliation is represented as still and silent (Lamentations 3:28): 'Let him sit alone and be silent since He has laid it on him.' And silence is mentioned as accompanying humility in Proverbs 30:32: 'If you have been foolish in exalting yourself or if you have plotted evil, put your hand on your mouth.'

I have now shown at some length and in detail the nature of the true humility that accompanies holy affections, as it appears in its tendency to cause people to think lowly of their own religious attainments in comparison to others' — and particularly of their attainments in humility itself. I have also shown the opposite tendency of spiritual pride, to incline people to think their attainments in these areas great. I have dwelt at this length on the mat-

ter because I regard it as of great importance, as it provides a certain distinction between true and counterfeit humility. It is also important because this disposition of hypocrites to look on themselves as better than others is something God has declared to be very hateful to Him — 'a smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all day' (Isaiah 65:5). It is mentioned as an instance of the pride of the inhabitants of Jerusalem — that holy city, as it was called — that they considered themselves far superior to the people of Sodom, and therefore regarded them as beneath their notice. As Ezekiel 16:56 says: 'Your sister Sodom was not mentioned in your mouth in the day of your pride.'

Do not lightly pass over these things without applying them to yourself. Once you take in the idea that it is a bad sign for a person to be inclined to think of himself as a better saint than others, a blinding bias in your own favor will likely arise — and you will probably need to examine yourself with great strictness to determine whether this is true of you. If on putting the question to yourself you answer, 'No, I have never thought so, and none think less of themselves than I do' — do not let the matter pass at that. Examine again whether you do not think yourself better than others on this very account — because you imagine that you think so little of yourself. Do you not have a high opinion of this humility? And if you again answer, 'No, I do not have a high opinion of my humility — it seems to me I am as proud as the devil' — examine yet again whether self-conceit does not rise up under this cover, and whether on the very account that you think yourself as proud as the devil, you do not think yourself to be very humble.

From this opposition between the nature of true humility and counterfeit humility — in the self-regard of those who have them — arises a wide variety of contrasting dispositions and behaviors.

A truly humble person, having such a low view of his own righteousness and holiness, is poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit is to feel oneself inwardly poor as to what is in oneself, and to have a corresponding disposition of heart. A truly humble person — especially one who is eminently humble — therefore naturally behaves in many ways like a poor person. As the saying goes, the poor speak gently, but the rich answer roughly. A poor person is not quick to take offense or to make sharp demands when among the wealthy. He is inclined to yield to others because he knows others stand above him. He is not stubborn or self-willed. He is patient with hard circumstances. He expects to be looked down on and accepts it patiently. He does not take it as a serious wrong that he is overlooked or little regarded. He is prepared to occupy a low place. He readily honors those above him. He takes correction quietly. He is easily willing to be taught and does not make much claim to the authority of his own understanding and judgment. He is not overly particular or fussy, and his spirit is disciplined to bear hard things. He is not presumptuous or inclined to take much upon himself — it is natural for him to be subject to others. This is how it is with the humble Christian. Humility is, as the great Maastricht expresses it, a kind of holy lowliness of spirit.

A person who is very poor is a beggar — and so is the one who is poor in spirit. This is a great difference between gracious affections and false ones: under the former, the person remains a poor beggar at God's gates, exceedingly empty and needy. But false af-

fections make people appear to themselves rich and well-supplied, not greatly in need — they imagine they have a large stock of their own to live on.

A poor person is modest in his speech and manner, and the one who is poor in spirit is far more so — humbly and modestly conducting himself among people. It is useless for anyone to claim to be humble and childlike before God while being haughty, presumptuous, and arrogant in their behavior among people. The apostle makes clear that one design of the gospel is to cut off all boasting — not only before God but before people as well (Romans 4:1-2). Some who claim great humility are very haughty, bold, and presumptuous in their outward appearance and behavior. But they ought to consider these scriptures. Psalm 131:1: 'O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me.' Proverbs 6:16-17: 'There are six things which the Lord hates... a proud look.' Proverbs 21:4: 'Haughty eyes and a proud heart — the lamp of the wicked — is sin.'

A humble spirit will incline a Christian to honor all people, as 1 Peter 2:17 says: 'Honor all people.' A humble Christian is not only disposed to honor the saints in his behavior, but also other people — in all ways that do not imply an approval of their sins. Thus Abraham, the great pattern for believers, honored the sons of Heth (Genesis 23:11-12), bowing himself to the people of the land. This was a remarkable instance of humble behavior toward those who were outside of Christ — people Abraham knew to be so, and whom he was therefore unwilling to allow his servant to take a wife for his son from among them, and whose daughters, the daughters of Heth, were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. So also Paul

honored Festus (Acts 26:25): 'I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus.' Not only will Christian humility incline people to honor wicked people who are outside the visible church, but also false brothers and persecutors. As Jacob, when he was in an excellent frame of spirit — having just wrestled all night with God and received the blessing — honored Esau, his false and persecuting brother (Genesis 33:3, 14-15): 'He himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.' He called Esau 'my lord' and instructed all his household to honor him in the same way.

I have now tried to describe the heart and behavior of a person governed by truly gracious humility, as closely in agreement with the Scriptures as I am able.

All truly holy affections flow out of a heart like this. Christian affections are like Mary's precious ointment that she poured on Christ's head, filling the whole house with a sweet fragrance. That ointment was poured out of an alabaster box. In the same way, gracious affections flow out to Christ from a pure heart. That ointment was poured out of a broken box. Until the box was broken, the ointment could not flow or spread its fragrance. In the same way, gracious affections flow out of a broken heart. Gracious affections are also like those of Mary Magdalene (Luke, at the latter end), who poured precious ointment on Christ out of a broken alabaster box, anointing the feet of Jesus after she had washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. All gracious affections that are a sweet fragrance to Christ, and that fill the soul of a Christian with a heavenly sweetness, are broken-hearted affections. A truly Christian love, whether directed toward God or toward people, is a humble, broken-hearted love. The desires of the

saints, however intense, are humble desires. Their hope is a humble hope. And their joy, even when it is unspeakable and full of glory, is a humble, broken-hearted joy that leaves the Christian more poor in spirit, more like a little child, and more inclined toward universal lowliness of behavior.

7. Another way that gracious affections are distinguished from others is that they are accompanied by a change of nature.

All gracious affections arise from a spiritual understanding in which the soul has the excellence and glory of divine things revealed to it, as was shown before. But all spiritual discoveries are transforming. They do not merely change the soul's present experience, sensation, and condition. They have such power and effectiveness that they change the very nature of the soul: 2 Corinthians 3:18. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Such power as this is properly divine power, and it belongs uniquely to the Spirit of the Lord. Other power may greatly change people's present states and feelings, but only the power of a Creator can change a person's nature or give a new nature. No discoveries or illuminations except those that are divine and supernatural will have this supernatural effect. But all discoveries that are truly divine do have this effect. The soul is deeply affected by these discoveries, and so affected as to be transformed.

This is what happens with the affections the soul experiences during conversion. The Scripture's descriptions of conversion strongly imply and signify a change of nature: being born again, becoming new creatures, rising from the dead, being renewed in the spirit of the mind, dying to sin and living to righteousness,

putting off the old man and putting on the new man, being grafted into a new stock, having a divine seed planted in the heart, being made partakers of the divine nature, and so on.

Therefore, if there is no great and remarkable lasting change in people who think they have experienced a work of conversion, all their imaginations and claims are empty, no matter how much they have been emotionally moved. Conversion, if we give any credit to the Scripture, is a great and universal change of the person, turning him from sin to God. A person may be restrained from sin before he is converted, but when he is converted, he is not only restrained from sin -- his very heart and nature are turned from it toward holiness. From that point forward, he becomes a holy person and an enemy of sin. If, after a person's affections at his supposed conversion, it turns out that in a short time there is no noticeable or remarkable change in him regarding the bad qualities and evil habits that were previously visible -- and he ordinarily remains under the same kind of dispositions as before, and the same things still describe his character, and he appears as selfish, worldly, dull, perverse, unchristian, and corrupt as ever -- that is greater evidence against him than the best story of spiritual experiences ever told is evidence for him. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither a high profession nor a low profession, neither an impressive story nor a broken one, counts for anything -- but only a new creature.

If there is a very great visible change in a person for a while, but it does not last and he afterward returns to being much as he used to be, this appears to be no change of nature. For nature is an

enduring thing. A pig with a filthy nature may be washed, but the piggish nature remains. And a dove with a clean nature may be dirtied, but its clean nature remains.

Of course, allowances must be made for natural temperament. Conversion does not entirely root out a person's natural temperament. The sins a person was most inclined toward before conversion may still be the ones he is most likely to fall into. But conversion will still make a great change even with respect to these sins. Though grace, while imperfect, does not root out an evil natural temperament, it has great power and effectiveness to correct it. The change brought about in conversion is a universal change. Grace changes a person with respect to everything sinful in him. The old man is put off and the new man put on. They are sanctified throughout. The person becomes a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. All sin is put to death -- sins of temperament as well as others. If a person before conversion was by natural temperament especially inclined to lust, drunkenness, or malice, converting grace will make a great change in him regarding these evil dispositions. Although he may still be most at risk for these sins, they will no longer have dominion over him, and they will no longer properly describe his character. Indeed, true repentance does in some respects especially turn a person against his own particular sin -- the one in which he has been most guilty and has chiefly dishonored God. The person who forsakes other sins but preserves his leading sin -- the one he is chiefly inclined to -- is like Saul, who was sent against God's enemies the Amalekites with a strict command to spare none of them

alive but utterly destroy them, small and great. He utterly destroyed the lesser people but saved the king, the chief of them all, alive.

Some people foolishly argue in favor of their discoveries and affections by saying that when those experiences are gone, they are left completely without any life, feeling, or anything like what they had before. They think it is evidence that what they experienced was from God and not from themselves, because, as they say, when God leaves, everything is gone -- they can see and feel nothing, and they are no better than they used to be.

It is very true that all grace and goodness in the hearts of the saints comes entirely from God, and they are universally and immediately dependent on Him for it. But these people are mistaken about the way God communicates Himself and His Spirit in giving saving grace to the soul. He gives His Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul and to dwell there as a principle of nature, so that the soul, in being given grace, is given a new nature. But nature is an enduring thing. All the exercises of grace come entirely from Christ. But these exercises do not come from Christ as something alive moving and acting upon something lifeless that remains lifeless. Rather, life is communicated to it, so that through Christ's power it has a vital nature living within itself. In the soul where Christ is savingly present, He lives there. He does not merely live upon it, violently acting on it from outside. He lives in it, so that the soul itself is also alive. Grace in the soul is as much from Christ as the light in a piece of glass held out in the sunbeams is from the sun. But this comparison only partly represents the way grace is communicated, because the glass remains as it was -- not at all changed -- and is as much without any light inherent in its nature

as ever. But the soul of a saint receives light from the Sun of Righteousness in such a way that its nature is changed, and it truly becomes a luminous thing. Not only does the Sun shine in the saints, but they also become little suns, sharing in the nature of the fountain of their light. In this respect, the way they receive light is more like the lamps in the tabernacle than like a reflecting glass. Though those lamps were lit by fire from heaven, they themselves became burning and shining things. The saints do not only drink of the water of life drawn from the original fountain, but this water becomes a fountain of water in them, springing up there and flowing out of them (John 4:14; 7:38-39). Grace is compared to a seed planted that not only sits in the ground but takes hold of it, has root there, grows there, and is an enduring principle of life and nature there.

Just as spiritual discoveries and affections given at first conversion are transforming, so it is with all illuminations and affections of this kind that people experience afterward. They are all transforming. There is a similar divine power and energy in them as in the first discoveries. They still reach the bottom of the heart and affect and change the very nature of the soul, in proportion to the degree in which they are given. This transformation of nature is continued and carried on by them to the end of life, until it is brought to perfection in glory. For this reason, the progress of the work of grace in the hearts of the saints is described in Scripture as a continued conversion and renewal of nature. So the apostle urged those at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, who were the subjects of God's redeeming mercies, to be transformed by the renewing of their mind (Romans 12:1-2). 'I urge you therefore by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice -- and

do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.' Compare with chapter 1:7. So the apostle, writing to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus who were at Ephesus (Ephesians 1:1) -- those who were once dead in trespasses and sins but were now made alive, raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, created in Christ Jesus for good works, who were once far off but were now brought near by the blood of Christ, who were no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built together as a dwelling place of God through the Spirit -- I say, the apostle writing to these tells them that he did not stop praying for them, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know (or experience) what was the surpassing greatness of God's power toward those who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:16 to the end). In this the apostle was referring to the glorious power and work of God in converting and renewing the soul, as is most clear by what follows. So the apostle urged the same people to put off the old self, which is being corrupted according to deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

There is a kind of intense affections that some people have from time to time that leave them without any appearance of a lasting effect. They disappear suddenly, so that from the very

height of their emotion and seeming rapture, they pass at once to being completely dead and void of all feeling and activity. This is certainly not how it usually goes with high gracious affections. They leave a sweet taste and relish of divine things on the heart, and a stronger inclination of the soul toward God and holiness. As Moses' face not only shone while he was on the mountain, conversing closely with God, but continued to shine after he came down from the mountain. When people have been conversing with Christ in an extraordinary way, a noticeable effect of it remains on them. There is something remarkable in their disposition and demeanor which, if we take note of it and trace it to its cause, we will find is because they have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

8. Truly gracious affections differ from false and deceptive ones in that they lead to and are accompanied by the lamb-like, dove-like spirit and temperament of Jesus Christ. In other words, they naturally produce and promote a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness, and mercy, like what appeared in Christ.

The evidence for this in Scripture is very abundant. If we judge the nature of Christianity and the proper spirit of the Gospel by the Word of God, this spirit is what may above all else be called the Christian spirit, and may be viewed as the true and distinguishing disposition of the hearts of Christians as Christians. When some of Christ's disciples said something through carelessness and weakness that did not agree with such a spirit, Christ told them that 'they did not know what manner of spirit they were of' (Luke 9:55), implying that this spirit is the proper spirit of His religion and kingdom. All who are truly godly and real disciples of Christ have this spirit in them. And not only that, but they are of this spirit -- it is the spirit that so possesses and governs them that it is their true

and proper character. This is clear from what the wise man says in Proverbs 17:27, plainly referring to such a spirit as this: 'A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.' It is also clear from Christ's description of the qualities and temperament of those who are truly blessed, who shall obtain mercy, and who are God's children and heirs (Matthew 5). 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.' And that this spirit is the special character of God's elect is clear from Colossians 3:12-13. 'So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other.' And the apostle, speaking of the disposition that he describes as the most excellent and essential thing in Christianity -- without which no one is a true Christian, and the most glorious profession and gifts are nothing (calling this spirit by the name of love) -- describes it this way (1 Corinthians 13:4-5): 'Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered.' And the same apostle, in Galatians 5, deliberately declaring the distinguishing marks and fruits of true Christian grace, chiefly emphasizes the things that belong to the spirit and temperament I am speaking of (verses 22-23). 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.' And so does the apostle James, in describing true grace -- or that wisdom that is from above -- with the stated purpose that others who are of a contrary spirit may not deceive themselves and lie against the truth in claiming to be Christians when they are not

(James 3:14-17). 'But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.' 'For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.' 'But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits.'

Everything that belongs to holiness of heart does indeed belong to the nature of true Christianity and the character of Christians. But a spirit of holiness as it appears in some particular graces may especially be called the Christian spirit or temperament. There are certain attractive qualities and virtues that especially agree with the nature of the Gospel and the Christian profession. This is because they have a special connection with those divine attributes which God has most remarkably displayed and glorified in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, which is the great subject of the Christian revelation. They also have a special connection with the virtues that were so wonderfully exercised by Jesus Christ toward us in that work, and with the blessed example He set for us. They are likewise especially fitting in light of the particular aim and design of the work of redemption, the benefits we receive through it, and the relationship it brings us into with God and with one another. These virtues are humility, meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy. These things therefore especially belong to the character of Christians as such.

These things are spoken of as especially the character of Jesus Christ Himself, the great head of the Christian church. They are described this way in the prophecies of the Old Testament, as in the passage cited in Matthew 21:5. 'Tell the daughter of Zion, be-

hold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' Christ Himself speaks of them in Matthew 11:29. 'Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.' The same is shown by the name by which Christ is so often called in Scripture, namely the Lamb. And just as these things are especially the character of Christ, they are also especially the character of Christians. Christians are Christlike. None deserve the name of Christians who are not so in their prevailing character. 'The new self is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him' (Colossians 3:10). All true Christians 'beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image by His Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3:18). The elect are all 'predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren' (Romans 8:29). 'Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. For as is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly' (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). Christ is full of grace, and Christians all receive of His fullness, and grace for grace -- that is, there is grace in Christians answering to grace in Christ, just as there is a correspondence between wax and seal. There is character for character. The same kind of graces, the same spirit and temperament, the same things that belong to Christ's character belong to theirs. The disposition in which Christ's character especially consists is the disposition in which His image especially consists. Christians who live by reflecting the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine with the same kind of brightness -- the same mild, sweet, and pleasant beams. These lamps of the spiritual temple, kindled by fire from heaven, burn with the same kind

of flame. The branch is of the same nature as the stock and root, has the same sap, and bears the same kind of fruit. The members have the same kind of life as the head. It would be strange if Christians were not of the same temperament and spirit as Christ, when they are His flesh and His bone -- indeed, are one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17) -- and live so that it is not they who live, but Christ who lives in them. A Christian spirit is Christ's mark that He sets upon the souls of His people, His seal on their foreheads, bearing His image and inscription. Christians are followers of Christ, and they follow Him as they obey His call: 'Come to Me, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart' (Matthew 11:28-29). They follow Him as the Lamb: 'These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes' (Revelation 14:4). True Christians are clothed, as it were, with the meek, quiet, and loving temperament of Christ, for as many as are in Christ have put on Christ. And in this respect the church is clothed with the sun -- not only by being clothed with His imputed righteousness, but also by being adorned with His graces (Romans 13:14). Christ the great Shepherd is Himself a Lamb, and believers are also lambs. All the flock are lambs: 'Feed My lambs' (John 21:15). 'I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves' (Luke 10:3). The redemption of the church by Christ from the power of the devil was foreshadowed in David's delivering the lamb out of the mouth of the lion and the bear.

That this kind of virtue is the very nature of the Christian spirit -- the spirit that works in Christ and in His members -- and its distinguishing nature, is evident from the fact that the dove is the very symbol or emblem chosen by God to represent it. The things that are the best emblems of other things are those that best repre-

sent what is most distinguishing in their nature. The Spirit that descended on Christ when He was anointed by the Father descended on Him like a dove. The dove is a well-known emblem of meekness, harmlessness, peace, and love. But the same Spirit that descended on the head of the church descends on its members. 'God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts' (Galatians 4:6). 'And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him' (Romans 8:9). There is but one Spirit for the whole mystical body, head and members (1 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 4:4). Christ breathes His own Spirit on His disciples (John 20:22). Just as Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit descending on Him like a dove, Christians also have an anointing from the Holy One (1 John 2:20, 27). And they are anointed with the same oil. It is the same precious ointment on the head that goes down to the edges of the garments. On both, it is a Spirit of peace and love (Psalm 133:1-2). 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes.' The oil on Aaron's garments had the same sweet and matchless fragrance as the oil on his head -- the scent of the same sweet spices. Christian affections and Christian behavior are simply the fragrance of Christ's sweet ointment flowing out. Because the church has a dove-like temperament and disposition, it is said of her that she has dove's eyes (Song of Solomon 1:15). 'Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful. You have dove's eyes.' And Song of Solomon 4:1: 'Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are like doves behind your veil.' The same is said of Christ in Song of Solomon 5:12: 'His eyes are like doves.'

And the church is frequently compared to a dove in Scripture. Song of Solomon 2:14: 'O my dove, in the clefts of the rock.' Song of Solomon 5:2: 'Open to me, my love, my dove.' And Song of Solomon 6:9: 'My dove, my perfect one, is unique.' Psalm 68:13: 'You will be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' And Psalm 74:19: 'Do not deliver the soul of Your turtledove to the wild beast.' The dove that Noah sent out of the ark, which could find no resting place for the sole of her foot until she returned, was a type of a true saint.

Meekness is so much the character of the saints that the meek and the godly are used as synonymous terms in Scripture. So in Psalm 37:10-11, the wicked and the meek are set in opposition to one another, as wicked and godly. 'Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more -- but the meek will inherit the land.' So also Psalm 147:6: 'The Lord supports the humble; He brings down the wicked to the ground.'

It is doubtless largely for this reason that Christ represents all His disciples, all the heirs of heaven, as little children (Matthew 19:14). 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' Matthew 10:42: 'Whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.' Matthew 18:6: 'Whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble... Verse 10: See that you do not despise one of these little ones. Verse 14: It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.' John 13:33: 'Little children, I am with you a little while longer.' Little children are innocent and harmless. They do not do a great deal of damage in the world. People do not need to be afraid of them. They are not

a dangerous sort of people. Their anger does not last long. They do not store up offenses with deep resentment, harboring deep and rooted bitterness. So Christians, in malice, are children (1 Corinthians 14:20). Little children are not cunning and deceitful, but plain and simple. They are not skilled in the arts of trickery and deception, and are strangers to crafty disguises. They are yielding and flexible, not willful and stubborn. They do not trust their own understanding but rely on the instruction of parents and others of greater understanding. Here then is a fitting and vivid emblem of the followers of the Lamb. Being like little children in this way is not only something highly commendable that Christians approve of and aim at, and which some of extraordinary growth attain to. It is their universal character and absolutely necessary in order to enter the kingdom of heaven -- unless Christ was mistaken (Matthew 18:3). 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.' Mark 10:15: 'Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.'

But here some may be ready to ask: Is there no such thing as Christian fortitude and boldness for Christ, being good soldiers in the Christian warfare, and coming out boldly against the enemies of Christ and His people?

To which I answer: there doubtless is such a thing. The whole Christian life is compared to a warfare, and rightly so. And the most eminent Christians are the best soldiers, endowed with the greatest degrees of Christian fortitude. And it is the duty of God's people to be steadfast and vigorous in their opposition to the plans and ways of those who are trying to overthrow the kingdom of Christ and the cause of religion. But many people seem to be quite

mistaken about the nature of Christian fortitude. It is an exceedingly different thing from a brutal fierceness or the boldness of predatory beasts. True Christian fortitude consists in strength of mind, through grace, exercised in two things: in ruling and suppressing the evil and unruly passions and affections of the mind, and in steadfastly and freely exercising and following good affections and dispositions without being hindered by sinful fear or the opposition of enemies. But the passions that are restrained and kept under control in the exercise of this Christian strength and fortitude are the very passions that are vigorously and violently expressed in a false boldness for Christ. And the affections that are vigorously exercised in true fortitude are those Christian holy affections that are directly contrary to them. Although Christian fortitude appears in withstanding and counteracting outward enemies, it appears even more in resisting and suppressing the enemies within us, because they are our worst and strongest enemies and have the greatest advantage against us. The strength of the good soldier of Jesus Christ appears in nothing more than in steadfastly maintaining the holy calm, meekness, sweetness, and kindness of his mind amid all the storms, injuries, strange behavior, and surprising events of this evil and unreasonable world. The Scripture seems to indicate that true fortitude consists chiefly in this (Proverbs 16:32). 'He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.'

The most direct and certain way in the world to judge rightly what holy fortitude looks like in fighting God's enemies is to look at the Captain of all God's hosts, our great leader and example, and see where His fortitude and valor appeared in His chief conflict -- in the time of the greatest battle that ever was or ever will be

fought with these enemies, when He fought them all alone and none of the people were with Him, and exercised His fortitude in the highest degree that He ever did, and won that glorious victory that will be celebrated in the praises and triumphs of all the hosts of heaven throughout all eternity. I am speaking of Jesus Christ in the time of His last sufferings, when His enemies in earth and hell made their most violent attack upon Him, surrounding Him on every side like tearing and roaring lions. Doubtless here we see the fortitude of a holy warrior and champion in the cause of God in its highest perfection and greatest brilliance, and an example fit for soldiers to follow who fight under this Captain. But how did He show His holy boldness and valor at that time? Not in the exercise of any fiery passions, not in fierce and violent speeches, not in vehemently denouncing and crying out against the intolerable wickedness of His opponents, giving them their own in plain terms. Rather, He showed it by not opening His mouth when afflicted and oppressed, by going as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, not opening His mouth. He showed it by praying that the Father would forgive His cruel enemies because they did not know what they were doing -- not by shedding others' blood, but with all-conquering patience and love, shedding His own. Indeed, one of His disciples who had made a bold claim of loyalty to Christ, and confidently declared he would die with Christ rather than deny Him, began to swing a sword. But Christ meekly rebuked him and healed the wound he gave. Never was the patience, meekness, love, and forgiveness of Christ so gloriously displayed as at that time. Never did He appear so much a Lamb, and never did He show so much of the dove-like spirit as at that time. If therefore we see any of Christ's followers, in the midst

of the most violent, unreasonable, and wicked opposition from God's enemies and their own, maintaining under all this temptation the humility, quietness, and gentleness of a lamb, and the harmlessness, love, and sweetness of a dove, we may rightly judge that here is a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

When people are fierce and violent and express their sharp and bitter passions, it shows weakness instead of strength and fortitude. 1 Corinthians 3, at the beginning: 'And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. For you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?'

There is a pretended boldness for Christ that arises from no better principle than pride. A person may be eager to expose himself to the world's dislike and even to provoke their displeasure out of pride. For it is the nature of spiritual pride to cause people to seek distinction and uniqueness, and so it often sets them at war with those they call worldly, so that they may be more highly exalted among their own group. True boldness for Christ is universal. It overcomes all and carries people above the displeasure of friends and foes, so that they will forsake everything rather than Christ, and would rather offend every party and be thought little of by everyone than offend Christ. And the duty that tests whether a person is willing to be despised by those of his own party, and thought the least worthy of their regard, is a much better test of his boldness for Christ than his eagerness to expose himself to the criticism of opponents. The apostle sought glory neither from pagans nor from Jews nor from Christians, as he declares in 1 Thessalonians 2:6. He is bold for Christ who has enough Christian

fortitude to openly confess his fault when he has committed one that requires it, and to humble himself, as it were, on his knees before opponents. Things like these are vastly greater evidence of holy boldness than resolutely and fiercely confronting opponents.

As some are greatly mistaken about the nature of true boldness for Christ, so they are about Christian zeal. It is indeed a flame, but a sweet one -- or rather, it is the heat and fervor of a sweet flame. For the flame whose heat it is, is none other than divine love or Christian charity, which is the sweetest and most generous thing that can be in the heart of a person or an angel. Zeal is the fervor of this flame as it ardently and vigorously goes out toward the good that is its object, desiring and pursuing it -- and as a result, opposing the evil that is contrary to it and hinders it. There is indeed opposition, and vigorous opposition, that is a part of zeal or rather an accompaniment of it, but it is against things, not against persons. Bitterness against persons is no part of it but is very contrary to it. The warmer true zeal is and the higher it is raised, the further a person is from such bitterness and the more full of love, both toward the evil and toward the good. As was just observed, zeal is nothing other in its very nature and essence than the fervor of a spirit of Christian charity. And as for the opposition that is in zeal against things, it is first and chiefly against the evil things in the person himself who has this zeal -- against the enemies of God and holiness that are in his own heart (since these are most in his view and what he most has to deal with) -- and only secondarily against the sins of others. Therefore there is nothing in true Christian zeal that is contrary to that spirit of meekness, gentleness, and love --

that spirit of a little child, a lamb, and a dove -- that has been described. Rather, zeal is entirely agreeable to it and tends to promote it.

But to say something specifically about this Christian spirit I have been describing, as exercised in these three things -- forgiveness, love, and mercy -- I would point out that the Scripture is very clear and explicit about the absolute necessity of each of these as belonging to the temperament and character of every Christian.

This is so regarding a forgiving spirit, or a disposition to overlook and forgive injuries. Christ gives it to us as both a negative and positive evidence, and is explicit in teaching us that if we have such a spirit, it is a sign that we ourselves are in a state of forgiveness and favor -- and that if we do not have such a spirit, we are not forgiven by God. He seems to take special care that we would notice this and always keep it in mind. Matthew 6:12, 14-15. 'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.' Christ expresses the same thing again at another time in Mark 11:25-26, and again in Matthew 18:22 to the end, in the parable of the servant who owed his lord ten thousand talents but would not forgive his fellow servant a hundred denarii, and was therefore delivered to the torturers. In applying the parable, Christ says (verse 35), 'My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.'

And that all true saints are of a loving, generous, and giving temperament, the Scripture is very plain and abundant. Without it, the apostle tells us, though we speak with the tongues of men and

of angels, we are a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And though we have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, yet without this spirit we are nothing. And there is no single virtue or disposition of the mind that is so often and so explicitly insisted on in the marks laid down in the New Testament for recognizing true Christians. It is often given as a sign that is uniquely distinguishing, by which all may know Christ's disciples and by which they may know themselves. And it is often laid down as both a negative and a positive evidence. Christ calls the law of love, by way of special emphasis, His commandment (John 13:34). 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.' And John 15:12. 'This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.' And verse 17. 'This I command you, that you love one another.' And He says in John 13:35, 'By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.' And John 14:21, still with a special reference to what He calls His commandment: 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.' The beloved disciple, who had so much of this sweet temperament himself, insists on it abundantly in his epistles. There is none of the apostles who lays down as many explicit signs of grace for believers to test themselves by, and in his signs he insists on scarcely anything else but a spirit of Christian love and the conduct that goes with it. 1 John 2:9-10: 'The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.' 1 John 3:14. 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.' Verses 18-19. 'Little chil-

dren, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him.' Verses 23-24. 'This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.' 1 John 4:7-8. 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.' Verses 12-13. 'No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.' Verse 16. 'God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.' Verse 20. 'If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.'

And the Scripture is as plain as it could possibly be that none are true saints except those whose true character is that they are disposed to pity and relieve their fellow creatures who are poor, needy, and afflicted. Psalm 37:21: 'The righteous is gracious and gives.' Verse 26: 'All day long he is gracious and lends.' Psalm 112:5: 'A good man is gracious and lends.' Verse 9: 'He has given freely to the poor.' Proverbs 14:31: 'He who is gracious to the poor honors God.' Proverbs 21:26: 'The righteous gives and does not hold back.' Jeremiah 22:16: 'He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; then it was well. Is not that what it means to know Me? declares the Lord.' James 1:27: 'Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in

their distress.' Hosea 6:6: 'For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.' Matthew 5:7: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.' 2 Corinthians 8:8: 'I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.' James 2:13-16: 'For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?' 1 John 3:17: 'But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?' Christ, in the description He gives us of the day of judgment in Matthew 25 -- which is the most detailed account we have in all the Bible -- represents that judgment will be passed on that day according to whether people have been of a merciful spirit and practice, or not. Christ's purpose in giving such a description of the proceedings of that day is plainly to impress upon all His followers that unless this was their spirit and practice, there was no hope of their being accepted and acknowledged by Him on that day. Therefore this is a conviction that we ought to have. We find in Scripture that a righteous man and a merciful man are equivalent expressions (Isaiah 57:1). 'The righteous man perishes, and no one takes it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from evil.'

So we see how full, clear, and abundant the evidence from Scripture is that those who are truly gracious are under the governance of that lamb-like, dove-like spirit of Jesus Christ. This is essentially and supremely the nature of the saving grace of the Gospel and the proper spirit of true Christianity. We may therefore determine with certainty that all truly Christian affections are accompanied by such a spirit, and that this is the natural tendency of the fear and hope, the sorrow and the joy, the confidence and the zeal of true Christians.

No one should understand me to mean that true Christians have no remains of a contrary spirit and can never in any instance behave in a way inconsistent with such a spirit. But I do affirm -- and will affirm it until I deny the Bible to be worth anything -- that everything in Christians that belongs to true Christianity tends in this direction and works this way. There is no true Christian on earth who is not so under the prevailing power of this spirit that he is properly characterized by it, and it is truly and justly his defining quality. Therefore ministers and others have no warrant from Christ to encourage people of a contrary character and behavior to think they are converted, simply because they tell an impressive story of illuminations and discoveries. In doing so they would be setting up their own wisdom against Christ's, and judging without and against the rule by which Christ has declared all people should recognize His disciples. Some people place religion so much in certain passing illuminations and impressions (especially if they follow a particular method and order) and so little in the spirit and temperament a person has, that they greatly disfigure religion and form ideas of Christianity quite different from what it is as described in the Scriptures. Scripture knows nothing of true

Christians who are of a selfish, mean, harsh, and quarrelsome spirit. Nothing could be more absurd than the idea of a harsh, hard-hearted, tightfisted, proud, spiteful true Christian. We must learn the way of bringing ourselves to the rules, not the rules to ourselves, and stop stretching and straining the rules of God's Word to include ourselves and some of our neighbors, until we make them completely meaningless.

It is true that allowances must be made for people's natural temperament with regard to these things, as well as others. But not such allowances as to allow people who were once wolves and serpents to be considered converted without any remarkable change in the spirit of their mind. The change made by true conversion is usually most remarkable and noticeable with respect to whatever was the wickedness the person was most notoriously guilty of. Grace has just as great a tendency to restrain and put to death sins that are contrary to the spirit that has been described as it has to put to death drunkenness or sexual immorality. Indeed, Scripture represents the change brought about by Gospel grace as especially appearing in a change of this kind (Isaiah 11:6-9). 'The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fattened animal together; and a little boy will lead them. And the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' And Isaiah 65:25 says the same. Accordingly we find that in the early days of the Christian church, converts were remarkably

changed in this respect (Titus 3:3 and following). 'For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared -- He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.' And Colossians 3:7-8. 'In them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.'

9. Gracious affections soften the heart and are accompanied and followed by a Christian tenderness of spirit.

False affections, however much people may seem to be melted by them while they are new, ultimately tend to harden the heart. A disposition toward certain kinds of passions may be established -- specifically, those that involve self-seeking, self-exaltation, and opposition to others. But false affections, along with the delusion that accompanies them, ultimately tend to dull the mind and close it against those affections in which tenderness of heart consists. Their final effect is that people, in the settled state of their minds, become less affected by their present and past sins, less conscientious about future sins, less moved by the warnings and cautions of God's Word or by God's discipline in His providence, more careless about the state of their hearts and the character and tendency of their conduct, less quick to discern what is sinful, and less afraid of the appearance of evil than they were while under legal awakenings and fears of hell. Now that they have had these impressions and affections and have a high opinion of themselves and consider their spiritual state secure, they can live much more comfortably than before while neglecting duties that are troublesome and in-

convenient. They are much slower and more selective in complying with difficult commands, not at all alarmed at the appearance of their own faults and failures, emboldened to go easier on themselves regarding the labor and painstaking care and precision in their walk, and they more easily yield to temptations and the pull of their desires. They are far less careful about their behavior when they come into the holy presence of God in public or private worship. Previously, under legal convictions, they may have worked hard in religion and denied themselves in many things. But now that they think themselves out of danger of hell, they largely set aside the burden of the cross, spare themselves the trouble of difficult duties, and allow themselves more comfort and enjoyment of their ease and their desires.

Such people, instead of embracing Christ as their Savior from sin, trust in Him as the protector of their sins. Instead of fleeing to Him as their refuge from their spiritual enemies, they use Him as a defense for their spiritual enemies against God, to strengthen those enemies against Him. They make Christ the servant of sin and a great officer and agent of the devil, strengthening his cause and making him above all things strong against the Lord -- so that they can sin against Him with bold confidence and without any fear, being effectively shielded from restraint by His most solemn warnings and most terrible threats. They trust in Christ to preserve for them the quiet enjoyment of their sins and to be their shield against God's displeasure, while they draw close to Him, even to His bosom, the place of His children, to fight against Him with their deadly weapons hidden under their garments. And some of

these, at the same time, make a great profession of love to God, assurance of His favor, and great joy in tasting the sweetness of His love.

This is how those trusted in Christ whom the apostle Jude speaks of, who crept in among the saints unnoticed -- but were really ungodly people, turning the grace of God into a license for sin (Jude 4). These are those who trust in their own righteousness, and because God has promised that the righteous shall surely live, or certainly be saved, are therefore emboldened to commit sin. God threatens them in Ezekiel 33:13. When I say to the righteous he will surely live, if he trusts in his righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but for the iniquity he has committed, he will die for it.

Gracious affections have an entirely opposite tendency. They turn a heart of stone more and more into a heart of flesh. Holy love and hope are principles vastly more effective upon the heart to make it tender, to fill it with a dread of sin or whatever might displease and offend God, and to move it to watchfulness, care, and precision, than a slavish fear of hell. Gracious affections, as was observed before, flow out of a contrite heart -- or, as the word signifies, a bruised heart -- bruised and broken with godly sorrow, which makes the heart tender just as bruised flesh is tender and easily hurt. Godly sorrow has much greater power to make the heart tender than mere legal sorrow from selfish motives.

The tenderness of the heart of a true Christian is beautifully pictured by our Savior in His comparing such a person to a little child. The flesh of a little child is very tender, and so is the heart of one who is newly born again. This is represented in what we are told of Naaman's cure of his leprosy by washing in the Jordan at

the direction of the prophet, which was undoubtedly a picture of the renewing of the soul by washing in the washing of regeneration. We are told in 2 Kings 5:14 that he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child. Not only is the flesh of a little child tender, but his mind is tender. A little child has his heart easily moved, influenced, and bent. So it is with a Christian in spiritual things. A little child is apt to feel sympathy, to weep with those who weep, and cannot easily bear to see others in distress. So it is with a Christian (John 11:35; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26). A little child is easily won by kindness. So is a Christian. A little child is easily affected with grief at earthly troubles, and his heart melts and he falls to weeping. In the same way, the heart of a Christian is tender regarding the evil of sin. A little child is easily frightened by the appearance of outward dangers or anything that threatens to hurt him. In the same way, a Christian is apt to be alarmed at the appearance of moral evil and anything that threatens the harm of his soul. A little child, when he meets enemies or fierce animals, is not apt to trust his own strength but runs to his parents for safety. So a saint is not self-confident when engaging spiritual enemies but flees to Christ. A little child is apt to be suspicious of danger in dangerous places, afraid in the dark, afraid when left alone or far from home. In the same way, a saint is apt to be aware of his spiritual dangers, watchful over himself, full of fear when he cannot see his way clearly before him, afraid to be left alone and to be far from God (Proverbs 28:14). Happy is the man who fears always, but he who hardens his heart will fall into trouble. A little child is apt to be afraid of those in authority and to dread their anger and tremble at their

frowns and threats. So is a true saint with respect to God (Psalm 119:120). My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments. Isaiah 66:2. But to this one I will look: to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. Verse 5. Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word. Ezra 9:4. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel was assembled to me. Ezra 10:3. According to the counsel of my lord, and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God. A little child approaches those in authority with awe. So the saints approach God with holy awe and reverence. Job 13:11. Will not His majesty terrify you, and the dread of Him fall on you? Holy fear is so much the nature of true godliness that it is called in Scripture by no name more frequently than the fear of God.

Therefore gracious affections do not tend to make people bold, forward, noisy, and loud. Rather, they lead to speaking with trembling (Hosea 13:1). When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. Gracious affections lead to being clothed with a kind of holy fear in all conduct toward God and people, in keeping with Psalm 2:11; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 7:15; Ephesians 6:5; 1 Peter 3:2; Romans 11:20.

The tenderness of heart of a true Christian is beautifully expressed by the Savior's comparison of a Christian to a little child. The flesh of a little child is very tender — and so is the heart of one who is newly born spiritually. This is represented in the account of Naaman's healing from leprosy by washing in the Jordan at the prophet's direction — which was certainly a type of the renewing of the soul by washing in the laver of regeneration. As 2 Kings 5:14 tells us, 'he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was

restored like the flesh of a little child.' Not only is the flesh of a little child tender, but so is the mind. A little child has his heart easily moved, shaped, and bent — and so it is with a Christian in spiritual matters. A little child is quick to be touched with sympathy, to weep with those who weep, and cannot bear to see others in distress — and so it is with a Christian (John 11:35; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26). A little child is easily won by kindness — and so is a Christian. A little child is easily affected with grief at physical troubles, having his heart melted and breaking into tears — and so is the heart of a Christian with regard to the evil of sin. A little child is easily frightened by the appearance of outward dangers or anything that threatens to harm him — and so a Christian is readily alarmed by the appearance of moral evil or anything that threatens harm to the soul. A little child, when it meets enemies or fierce animals, does not trust its own strength but runs to its parents for safety — and so a saint is not self-confident when engaging spiritual enemies but flees to Christ. A little child is apt to be wary of danger, afraid in the dark, afraid when left alone or far from home — and so a saint tends to be aware of his spiritual dangers, suspicious of himself, full of concern when he cannot see his way plainly ahead of him, afraid to be left alone and far from God. As Proverbs 28:14 says: 'How blessed is the man who fears always, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.' A little child is easily afraid of those above him and is alarmed by their anger, trembling at their warnings — and so is a true saint with respect to God. Psalm 119:120: 'My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments.' Isaiah 66:2: 'But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.' Verse 5: 'Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at

His word.' Ezra 9:4: 'Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me.' Ezra 10:3: 'According to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God.' A little child approaches those above him with awe — and so the saints approach God with holy awe and reverence. Job 13:11: 'Will not His majesty terrify you, and the dread of Him fall on you?' Holy fear is so much the nature of true godliness that in Scripture it is more often called by no other name than 'the fear of God.'

Therefore gracious affections do not tend to make people bold, forward, loud, and aggressive — rather, they incline them to 'speak trembling' (Hosea 13:1: 'When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel. But through Baal he did wrong and died') and to clothe all their conduct toward God and people with a kind of holy fear — consistent with Psalm 2:11, 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Corinthians 7:15, Ephesians 6:5, 1 Peter 3:2, and Romans 11:20.

All gracious affections have a tendency to promote this Christian tenderness of heart that has been described -- not only godly sorrow, but also gracious joy (Psalm 2:11). 'Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling.' And also a gracious hope (Psalm 33:18). 'Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness.' And Psalm 147:11. 'The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.' Indeed, the most confident and assured hope, when it is truly gracious, has this tendency. The higher a holy hope is raised, the more there is of this Christian tenderness. The banishing of a slavish fear by a holy assurance is accompanied by a proportional increase of reverential fear. The lessening of the fear of the consequences of God's displeasure in future punishment is

accompanied by a proportional increase of the fear of His displeasure itself. The lessening of the fear of hell is accompanied by an increase of the fear of sin. The fading of anxious doubts about a person's spiritual state is accompanied by a proportional increase of watchfulness over his heart, in a distrust of its strength, wisdom, stability, faithfulness, and so on. The less likely he is to be afraid of natural evil -- having his heart firmly trusting in God and therefore not afraid of bad news -- the more likely he is to be alarmed at the appearance of moral evil, the evil of sin. As he has more holy boldness, he has less self-confidence and presumptuous boldness, and more humility. As he is more sure than others of deliverance from hell, he has more of a sense of deserving it. He is less likely than others to be shaken in faith, but more likely than others to be moved by solemn warnings, by God's frowns, and by the calamities of others. He has the firmest comfort but the softest heart. He is richer than others but poorest of all in spirit. He is the tallest and strongest saint but the least and most tender child among them.

10. Another way that truly gracious and holy affections differ from false ones is in their beautiful symmetry and proportion.

Not that the symmetry of the virtues and gracious affections of the saints in this life is perfect. It is often defective in many ways, through the imperfection of grace, for lack of proper instruction, through errors in judgment, or some particular difficulty of natural temperament, or deficiencies in education, and many other disadvantages that could be mentioned. But there is by no means that monstrous disproportion in the gracious affections and various parts of true religion in the saints that is very commonly observed in the false religion and counterfeit graces of hypocrites.

In the truly holy affections of the saints is found that proportion which is the natural consequence of the universality of their sanctification. They have the whole image of Christ upon them. They have put off the old self and put on the new self, complete in all his parts and members. It has pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell. There is every grace in Him. He is full of grace and truth. And those who are Christ's receive of His fullness, and grace for grace (John 1:14, 16) -- that is, there is every grace in them that is in Christ: grace for grace, grace answering to grace. There is no grace in Christ without its image in believers to correspond to it. The image is a true image, and there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image that is in the original -- there is feature for feature and member for member. There is symmetry and beauty in God's workmanship. The natural body that God has made consists of many members, and all are in beautiful proportion. So it is with the new self, consisting of various graces and affections. The body of one who was born a healthy child may lack exact proportion through illness and the weakness and wounds of some of its members, yet the disproportion is nothing like that of those who are born deformed.

It is with hypocrites as it was with Ephraim of old, at a time when God greatly complained of their hypocrisy (Hosea 7). 'Ephraim is a cake not turned' -- half baked and half raw. There is commonly no uniformity at all in their affections.

There is in many of them a great one-sidedness with regard to the different kinds of religious affections: great affections in some things and no proportion at all in others. Holy hope and holy fear go together in the saints, as has been observed from Psalms 33:18 and 147:11. But in some of these people there is the most confident

hope while they are completely lacking in reverence, self-watchfulness, and caution, and have to a great degree cast off fear. In the saints, joy and holy fear go together no matter how great the joy -- as it was with the disciples on that joyful morning of Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:8). 'And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy.' But many of these rejoice without trembling. Their joy is of the kind that is truly the opposite of godly fear.

One great difference between true saints and hypocrites is this: the joy and comfort of true saints is accompanied by godly sorrow and mourning for sin. They do not only have sorrow to prepare them for their first comfort — they continue to sorrow even after they are comforted and their joy is established. God foretold that His church would mourn and loathe themselves for their sins even after they had returned from captivity and were settled in Canaan — the land of rest, the land flowing with milk and honey (Ezekiel 20:42-43): 'And you will know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your fathers. There you will remember your ways and all your deeds by which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things you have done.' Ezekiel 16:61-63 says the same. A true saint is like a little child in this respect: before he was born again, he never had any godly sorrow, but since then he has it often. Just as a child, while still in the dark before birth, never cries — but as soon as it sees the light it begins to cry and continues to do so. Although Christ has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, freeing us from the sorrow of punishment so that we may now sweetly feed on the comforts He purchased for us, that does not prevent our feeding on those comforts from being accompanied by the sorrow of repentance. In the

same way, the children of Israel were commanded to eat the Passover lamb with bitter herbs. True saints are described in Scripture not only as those who have mourned for sin, but as those who do mourn — whose habit it is to continue mourning (Matthew 5:4): 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.'

Not only do hypocrites often show an essential deficiency in various kinds of religious affections, but they also show a strange partiality and lack of proportion in the same affections when applied to different objects.

Consider the affection of love. Some make great claims and a grand show of love to God and Christ, and may have been deeply moved by what they have heard or thought about them. Yet they have no spirit of love and goodwill toward people — instead they are inclined toward contention, envy, revenge, and speaking evil of others. They will nurse an old grudge in their hearts toward a neighbor for seven years, or even twice seven, living in genuine ill will and bitterness toward him. In their dealings with their neighbors, they are not very careful to follow the rule of doing to others as they would have done to them. As 1 John 4:20 says: 'If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.' On the other hand, there are those who appear to have a great deal of goodwill toward people — who are very kind and generous in their way — but have no love for God.

When it comes to love for other people, some have warm affections for certain individuals, but their love is far from the broad and universal character that truly Christian love has. They are filled with warm feelings toward some and full of bitterness toward others. They are devoted to their own group — those who approve

of them, love them, and admire them — but fierce against those who oppose and dislike them. As Matthew 5:45-46 says: 'Be like your Father who is in heaven, for He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?' Some show great affection toward their neighbors and claim to delight in the company of God's people, while at the same time being disagreeable and difficult toward their wives and close family at home, and very neglectful of their duties in those relationships. As for the great love toward sinners and opponents of religion that some seem to show — even to the point of extreme distress and agony, singling out one particular person from a crowd — when there is at the same time no general compassion toward sinners who are in equally desperate circumstances, the disproportion is monstrous. This does not appear to be a gracious affection. I do not think it strange at all that pity for perishing souls should reach the level of agony when all else is consistent with genuine grace, or that a truly gracious compassion should be expressed more intensely toward some individuals than others equally lost — especially on particular occasions. Many things can focus the mind and stir the heart toward a specific person at a given moment. Without doubt, some saints have been in great anguish for the souls of particular individuals, as if laboring in birth for them. But when people show racking agony for the soul of one single person — far beyond what is commonly seen even in the most eminent saints — while showing a spirit of meek, fervent love and compassion toward humanity in general at a far lesser degree than those eminent saints, such

agony is highly suspect. The reason has already been stated: the Spirit of God gives graces and gracious affections in a beautiful symmetry and proportion.

Some people's love is not only disproportionate when directed toward different persons — it is also disproportionate in how it is shown toward the same person. Some men show love by caring for people's physical needs: they are generous with their money and give to the poor. But they have no love for or concern about people's souls. Others claim to have great love for people's souls but show no compassion toward their physical needs. Showing love, pity, and distress for souls costs them nothing — but showing mercy to people's bodies requires them to open their wallets. True Christian love for our brothers and sisters extends to both their souls and their bodies. In this it resembles the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. He showed mercy to people's souls by laboring in preaching the gospel to them, and mercy to their bodies by going about doing good and healing every kind of sickness and disease among the people. Mark 6:34 gives a striking example of Christ showing compassion for both souls and bodies at once: 'When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.' That was His compassion for their souls. What follows shows His compassion for their bodies — because they had been there a long time with nothing to eat, He fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two fish. If the compassion of professing Christians toward others does not work in both of these ways, it is a sign that it is not true Christian compassion.

It is also a sign that affections are not genuine when people seem greatly affected by the faults of fellow Christians — the coldness and lifelessness of other believers — but show no comparable concern about their own defects and corruptions. A true Christian may certainly be affected by the coldness and dullness of other believers and may mourn greatly over it. But at the same time, he is not as readily affected by anyone else's heart as he is by his own. His own heart is most in view. He is most quick-sighted in detecting its faults, most aware of what makes them serious, and most ready to cry out against them. It takes a lower degree of virtue to move a person to pity himself and grieve over his own failures than to be genuinely moved by the failures of others. If someone has not reached the lesser, we can be sure he has not reached the greater.

Here I want to note a general rule: if people claim to have reached high levels of spiritual attainment but have never arrived at the lower levels, it is a sign their claim is empty. For example, if someone claims to have moved beyond mere morality to live a spiritual and godly life, yet has not even become a moral person in practice. Or if someone claims to be deeply affected by the wickedness of his own heart, yet is unmoved by obvious violations of God's commands in his own behavior — which is a lower attainment. Or if someone claims to be willing to be condemned for the glory of God, yet shows no readiness to suffer even small losses in his finances, reputation, or comfort for the sake of his duty. Or if someone claims he is not afraid to entrust his soul to Christ and commit everything to God — trusting His bare word and the faithfulness of His promises for eternal welfare — yet lacks enough confidence in God to dare trust Him with a small portion of his money given to godly or charitable uses. When this is the case, the claims

are clearly empty. A traveler who imagines he has passed far beyond a certain point on his route but has never actually reached it is simply wrong. And the person who has not climbed halfway up a hill has certainly not reached the top. But this is by the way.

What has been observed about the affection of love applies equally to other religious affections. When they are genuine, they extend in appropriate proportion to their proper and fitting objects. When they are false, they are commonly strangely out of proportion. This is true of religious desires and longings. In true saints, these are directed toward things that are spiritual and excellent in general, in some proportion to their excellence, importance, urgency, or closeness to the person. In false longings, it is often very different. They run with impatient intensity after something of lesser importance while other things of greater importance are neglected. For example: some people are repeatedly struck by a strong and strangely forceful urge to share what they are experiencing with others and to urge others forward — while at the same time feeling no comparable desire for things that true Christianity equally or even more naturally produces, such as pouring out the soul before God in earnest private prayer and praise, growing in conformity to Him, and living more to His glory. Scripture speaks far more often of 'groanings too deep for words,' and 'souls breaking with longing,' and 'longing, thirsting, and panting' in relation to these latter things than to the former.

The same applies to hatred and zeal. When these come from right principles, they are directed against sin in general, in proportion to its degree of sinfulness. As Psalm 119:104 says: 'I hate every false way.' Verse 128 says the same. But false hatred and zeal against sin are directed only against certain particular sins. Some

seem very zealous against profanity and pride in dress, yet are themselves notorious for greed, stinginess, gossip, envy toward those above them, a turbulent spirit toward those in authority, and deep-rooted ill will toward those who have wronged them. False zeal is against the sins of others, while the person shows no zeal against his own sins. But the person with true zeal exercises it chiefly against his own sins, while also showing appropriate zeal against dangerous and widespread wickedness in others. And some claim to have a great horror of their own inward sins and cry out much about their inner corruption — yet treat sins in practice lightly, committing them with little restraint or remorse. Yet these outward sins involve sin in both heart and life.

False affections are far more disproportionate than true ones not only in relation to different objects, but also in relation to different times. True Christians are not always at the same level — there can be great differences from one time to another, and even the best believers have reason to be ashamed of their unsteadiness. Yet there is nothing like the instability and inconsistency found in the hearts of false-hearted professors, who are not among those 'who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.' The righteous person is truly described as one 'whose heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord' (Psalm 112:7), and as having 'his heart strengthened by grace' (Hebrews 13:9), and as holding on his way. Job 17:9: 'The righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger.' The hypocrisy of the Jewish church is described by the image of a swift young camel racing back and forth across its paths.

If people are religious only in fits and starts — occasionally seeming to be lifted to the clouds in their affections, then suddenly falling back down, losing everything, and becoming quite careless and worldly — if this is their pattern of practice; if they appear greatly moved and intensely engaged in religion only during extraordinary seasons, such as a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, some unusual providence, the receiving of a great mercy, a supposed new conversion, or a recent experience they call a great discovery — but quickly return to a state in which their hearts are chiefly set on other things and the prevailing current of their affections runs ordinarily toward the things of this world — this is a sign of unsound affections. They are like the children of Israel in the wilderness, who were greatly stirred by what God had done for them at the Red Sea, sang His praises, and soon fell to craving the meat pots of Egypt — but then came to Mount Sinai, saw God's great manifestations there, seemed to be greatly engaged again and eagerly ready to enter into covenant with God, saying, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do and obey' — and then quickly made a golden calf. Such people are like rainwater that flows abundantly during a shower and shortly after, then quickly runs completely dry — flowing again only when the next shower comes. A true saint is like a stream from a living spring. It may be greatly swollen by rain and reduced during a drought, yet it flows constantly. As John 4:14 says: 'The water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up.' Or a true saint is like a tree planted beside such a stream, with a constant supply at its roots, always green even in the worst drought. Jeremiah 17:7-8: 'Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose hope is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream

and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.' Many hypocrites are like comets that appear for a time with a mighty blaze — very unsteady and erratic in their course (which is why they are called wandering stars in Jude 13) — and their blaze quickly fades, appearing only once in a long while. But true saints are like the fixed stars, which, though they rise and set and are often covered by clouds, remain steadfast in their orbits and truly shine with a constant light. Hypocritical affections are like a violent disturbance — like air stirred up by wind (Jude 12). But gracious affections move more like the natural flow of a river. Though it winds back and forth, meets obstacles, and runs more freely and swiftly in some places than others, it steadily and constantly moves in the same direction until it reaches the sea.

Just as false affections are strangely uneven and disproportionate across different times, they are often disproportionate across different places as well. Some people are greatly affected from time to time when in company with others, but what they experience in private — in quiet reflection, secret prayer, and communion with God when alone and away from the world — bears no real proportion to it. A true Christian certainly delights in religious fellowship and Christian conversation, and finds much there to stir his heart. But he also delights at times to withdraw from all people and converse with God in solitary places. This solitude also has its own special power to fix his heart and engage his affections. True religion leads people to spend much time alone, in quiet places, in holy meditation and prayer. This is how it worked in Isaac (Genesis 24:63). And far more strikingly, it is how it worked in Jesus Christ Himself. How often do we read of Him withdrawing

to mountains and lonely places for holy communion with His Father? It is difficult to completely conceal strong affections, but gracious affections are by nature far more quiet and hidden than counterfeit ones. This is true of the gracious sorrow of the saints. It is true of their sorrow over their own sins. The future gracious mourning of true penitents at the dawn of the latter-day glory is described as so private that it is hidden even from a person's closest companion (Zechariah 12:12-14): 'The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself and their wives by themselves; all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.' The same is true of their sorrow for the sins of others. The saints' anguish and labor for the souls of sinners is chiefly carried out in private. Jeremiah 13:17: 'But if you will not listen to it, my soul will sob in secret for such pride; and my eyes will bitterly weep and flow down with tears, because the flock of the Lord has been taken captive.' It is also true of gracious joys. They are 'hidden manna' in this respect as much as in others (Revelation 2:17). The psalmist seems to speak of his sweetest comforts as belonging to secret times (Psalm 63:5): 'My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.' Christ calls His bride away from the world into quiet, private places so that He may give her His sweetest love (Song of Solomon 7:11-12): 'Come, my beloved, let us go out into the country, let us spend the night in the villages... There I will give you my love.' The most remarkable di-

vine favors that the saints received, as recorded in Scripture, came during their times of retirement. The most significant manifestations God made of Himself and His covenant mercy to Abraham came when he was alone, apart from his large household — as anyone who reads his history carefully will see. Isaac received the special gift of Rebekah — who became his great comfort and through whom he received the promised offspring — while he was walking alone, meditating in the field. Jacob was in secret prayer when Christ came to him, and he wrestled with Him and obtained the blessing. God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush when Moses was alone in a desolate place at Mount Horeb (Exodus 3:1). And afterward, when God showed Moses His glory and admitted him to the highest degree of communion with God he ever enjoyed, Moses was alone on that same mountain — remaining there forty days and forty nights, and coming down with his face shining. God came to the great prophets Elijah and Elisha and spoke freely with them chiefly in their retirement. Elijah communed alone with God at Mount Sinai, as Moses had done. When Jesus Christ had His greatest foretaste of His coming glory at the transfiguration, it was not when He was with the crowds or even with all twelve disciples, but when He had withdrawn to a solitary place on a mountain with only three chosen disciples — and He charged them to tell no one until He had risen from the dead. When the angel Gabriel came to the blessed Virgin, and when the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her, she appears to have been alone and hidden from the world in this matter. Her dearest earthly companion, Joseph, to whom she was engaged, knew nothing of it — even though he was a righteous man. The first person to share in the joy of Christ's resurrection

was alone with Christ at the tomb (John 20). And when the beloved disciple was granted those wonderful visions of Christ and His future dealings with the church and the world, he was alone on the island of Patmos. This is not to say there are no examples of saints receiving great blessings in the company of others, or that Christian conversation and public worship do not greatly refresh and rejoice the hearts of God's people. My only point in all of this is to show that it is the nature of true grace to delight in solitude and secret communion with God, even though it also loves Christian fellowship in its proper place. If people appear intensely engaged in public and social religion but give little attention to private religion — greatly affected when with others but little moved when they have only God and Christ to commune with — this casts a deep shadow over their religion.

Eleventh distinguishing sign: another great and very important difference between gracious affections and others is this — the higher gracious affections are raised, the more a person's spiritual appetite and longing for further spiritual growth increases. False affections, on the contrary, rest satisfied in themselves.

The more a true saint loves God with gracious love, the more he desires to love Him, and the more troubled he is by how little he loves Him. The more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it, and the more he grieves over how much remaining love for it he finds in himself. The more he mourns for sin, the more he longs to mourn. The more his heart is broken, the more he desires it to be broken. The more he thirsts and longs after God and holiness, the more he longs to long, and to pour out his very soul in longing after God. Kindling gracious affections is like kindling a flame — the higher it rises, the more intense it becomes, and the more it burns,

the more powerfully it seeks to burn. So the spiritual appetite for holiness and for an increase of holy affections is far more alive and keen in those who are most eminent in holiness than in others, and more active when grace and holy affections are at their liveliest than at other times. It is just as natural for one who is spiritually newborn to thirst for growth in holiness as it is for a newborn baby to thirst for its mother's milk — and the baby's appetite is sharpest when it is most healthy. As 1 Peter 2:2-3 says: 'Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.' The most that the saints have in this world is only a taste, a first sampling of the future glory that is their true fullness. It is only an earnest of their future inheritance in their hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). The most eminent saints in this life are still only children compared to what they will be — their future state of maturity and perfection — as the apostle notes in 1 Corinthians 13:10-11. The highest degree of holiness and perfection the saints reach in this world tends not toward satisfaction or a lessening of desire for more, but on the contrary makes them more eager to press forward. This is clear from the apostle's words in Philippians 3:13-15: 'Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal... Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude.'

The reason for this is that the more people have of holy affections, the more they have of that spiritual taste I described earlier — by which they perceive the excellence and savor the divine sweetness of holiness. And the more grace they have, in this state of imperfection, the more clearly they see their imperfection, emptiness, and distance from what they ought to be — and there-

fore the more they see their need for grace. I showed this at length when discussing the nature of evangelical humiliation. Grace, as long as it is imperfect, is also by nature a growing thing, in a growing state. We see this with all living things — while they are in a state of imperfection and growth, their nature tends toward growth, and the more healthy and vigorous they are, the more powerfully that tendency operates. Therefore the cry of every true grace is like the cry of true faith in Mark 9:24: 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.' The greater a true Christian's spiritual discoveries and affections, the more earnestly he begs for grace and spiritual nourishment that he may grow — and the more eagerly he pursues it through the proper means and efforts. For true and gracious longings after holiness are no idle, ineffectual desires.

But someone may object and ask: how is this consistent with what everyone agrees on — that spiritual enjoyments are of a soul-satisfying nature?

I answer: this apparent tension disappears when we consider the specific sense in which spiritual enjoyments are soul-satisfying. They are certainly not soul-satisfying in the sense that even a tiny measure of them leaves a person desiring nothing more. Rather, spiritual enjoyments are soul-satisfying in the following respects. First, they are fully suited by their nature to the soul's capacity and need. Those who find them desire no other kind of enjoyment. They sit down fully content with this kind of happiness, wanting no change and no longer wandering about asking, 'Who will show us any good?' The soul is never filled to the point of discomfort, never weary, but gives itself completely and continuously to this happiness. This does not mean that those who have something of this happiness do not desire more of the same. Second, they are

satisfying in that they answer the expectation of the appetite. When the appetite is strong for something, the expectation is correspondingly high. Appetite for a particular object includes expectation by its very nature. Worldly enjoyments do not satisfy this expectation — the person expected great happiness but is disappointed. Spiritual enjoyments are different; they fully answer and satisfy what was expected. Third, the pleasure of spiritual enjoyments is lasting. This is not true of worldly enjoyments. They satisfy particular appetites in a sense, but in being satisfied, the appetite is glutted and the pleasure is over. As soon as it is gone, the general human hunger for happiness returns — empty, with nothing to satisfy it. So gratifying a particular appetite only diminishes and empties the deeper thirst of human nature. Fourth, spiritual good is satisfying in that there is enough of it — an infinite ocean of it — to fully satisfy the soul in degree, if only the obstacles were removed and the capacity for enjoyment were properly engaged. If people are not fully satisfied here, the fault is in themselves — they have not opened their mouths wide enough.

None of this argues that a soul who has tasted a little has no appetite for more of the same, or that the appetite will not grow as he tastes more, until he reaches fullness. Objects attracted toward the earth move more strongly toward it the closer they get, and are not at rest until they reach the center. Spiritual good is of a satisfying nature — and for that very reason, the soul that tastes it and comes to know its nature will thirst for it and for fullness of it, so that it may be truly satisfied. The more a person experiences and comes to know this excellent, unparalleled, and exquisitely satisfying sweetness, the more earnestly he will hunger and thirst for

more, until he comes to perfection. Therefore it is the nature of spiritual affections that the greater they are, the greater the appetite and longing for grace and holiness.

With false and counterfeit joys and religious affections, however, it is the opposite. If before there was some kind of great desire for grace, as these false affections rise, that desire ceases or fades. Perhaps before, while the person was under legal conviction and greatly afraid of hell, he earnestly longed to receive spiritual light in his understanding, faith in Christ, and love for God. But now that these false affections have risen and deceived him into confidence that he is converted and in a good state, there are no more earnest longings for light and grace. His goal has been achieved — he is confident his sins are forgiven and that he will go to heaven, and so he is satisfied. Especially when false affections are raised very high do they put an end to longing for grace and holiness. Such a person no longer appears to himself as poor and empty. On the contrary, he is rich and has accumulated much, and can hardly imagine anything more excellent than what he has already attained.

This is why many people's earnest seeking comes to an end once they believe they have been converted — or at least after they have had those high affections that make them fully confident of it. Before, while they saw themselves as still in a natural state, they were engaged in seeking God and Christ, crying earnestly for grace, and striving in the use of the means of grace. Now they act as though their work is finished: they live off that first experience, or some high affections now past, and their crying and striving after God and grace comes to an end. Yet the holy principles that drive a true saint have a far more powerful effect in stirring him to

earnest seeking of God and holiness than a servile fear of hell ever could. This is why seeking God is identified as one of the distinguishing marks of the saints — 'those who seek God' is one of the scriptural names for the godly. Psalm 24:6: 'This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face — even Jacob.' Psalm 69:6: 'May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me.' Verse 32: 'The humble have seen it and are glad; you who seek God, let your heart revive.' Psalm 40:16: 'Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let those who love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified."' Scripture everywhere represents the Christian's seeking, striving, and labor as chiefly belonging to the period after conversion, and presents conversion as only the beginning of the work. Almost everything said in the New Testament about watching, giving careful attention to oneself, running the race set before us, striving and agonizing, wrestling not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, fighting, putting on the whole armor of God, standing firm after doing all to stand, pressing forward, reaching ahead, persisting in prayer, crying to God day and night — almost all of this is directed to the saints. For every one time these things are applied to sinners seeking conversion, they are applied ten times to the saints' pursuit of the great business of their high calling. But many people to-day have gotten into a strange unscriptural pattern — doing all their striving and wrestling before conversion, and then having an easy time of it afterward, sitting back to enjoy their idleness and complacency as if they now had everything they need and were rich and full. But as the Lord 'has filled the hungry with good things,' those who are rich like this 'He has sent away empty' (Luke 1:53).

No doubt some hypocrites who have only high affections will think they can pass this test and will readily say that they do not want to rest on past attainments but to keep pressing forward — that they do desire more, they long after God and Christ, they desire more holiness, and they seek it. But the truth is, their desires are not properly the desires of appetite for holiness itself — for its own sake, for its moral excellence and holy sweetness — but only for secondary ends. They long for clearer spiritual discoveries so they can feel more assured about their standing, or because great discoveries gratify self by making them feel especially favored by God and elevated above others. They long to taste God's love more than they long to have more love for God. Or perhaps they manufacture a kind of forced, imagined longing, because they think they must long for more grace or it will look like a bad sign. But these things are very different from the natural and almost involuntary hunger and thirsting of the new person after God and holiness. There is an inward burning desire in a true saint for holiness that is as natural to the new creature as vital warmth is to the body. There is a holy breathing and panting after the Spirit of God for an increase of holiness that is as natural to a holy nature as breathing is to a living body. And holiness — sanctification itself — is more directly the object of this desire than any manifestation of God's love and favor. This is the food and drink that the spiritual appetite is after. As John 4:34 says: 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.' In Scripture, when the desires, longings, and thirstings of the saints are described, righteousness and God's law are far more often mentioned as their object than anything else. The saints 'long for the pure milk of the word' — not so much as proof of God's love to them, but 'so that by

it they may grow' in holiness. I showed earlier that holiness is the immediate object of spiritual taste. Undoubtedly, the same sweetness that is the chief object of a spiritual taste is also the chief object of a spiritual appetite. Grace is the godly person's treasure. Isaiah 33:6: 'The fear of the Lord is his treasure.' Godliness is the gain he is eager and covetous of (1 Timothy 6:6). Hypocrites long for spiritual discoveries more for the immediate comfort the discovery brings and for the high sense of God's love they get from it than for any sanctifying effect. But neither a longing for great spiritual discoveries, nor for deep tastes of God's love, nor for heaven, nor even for death — none of these is anywhere near as distinguishing a mark of true saints as longing for a more holy heart and a more holy life.

I have now come to the last distinguishing mark of holy affections I will discuss.

Twelfth distinguishing sign: gracious and holy affections find their expression and fruit in Christian practice. That is, they have such influence and power in the person who experiences them that they cause him to live a life that is broadly and consistently shaped and directed by Christian principles.

This involves three things. First, his conduct and practice in the world must be broadly shaped and directed by Christian rules. Second, he must make holy practice his primary business above all other things — the pursuit that he is chiefly engaged in and devoted to, and that he follows with the greatest earnestness and diligence, so that he can truly be said to make this religious practice his chief work and calling. Third, he must persist in it to the end of his life — so that it can be said not only to be his business at certain seasons (on Sundays, or during special occasions, or for a

month or a year or seven years, or under particular circumstances) but the business of his life — the pursuit he continues in through all changes and under all trials, as long as he lives.

The necessity of each of these things in all true Christians is taught most clearly and fully in the Word of God.

First, universal obedience is required. 1 John 3:3 and following: 'Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the devil.' 1 John 5:18: 'We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.' John 15:14: 'You are My friends if you do what I command you.' James 2:10: 'Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.' 1 Corinthians 6:9: 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters,' and so on, 'will inherit the kingdom of God.' Galatians 5:19-20: 'Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.' This is equivalent to saying: those who do any kind of wickedness. Job 31:4-7: 'Does He not see my ways and number all my steps? Let Him weigh me with accurate scales, and let God know my integrity. If my step has turned from the way, or my

heart followed my eyes, or if any spot has stuck to my hands,' and so on. Ezekiel 33:15: 'If he walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he will surely live.' If even one member is corrupt and we do not cut it off, it will drag the whole body to hell (Matthew 5:29-30). Saul was commanded to destroy all of God's enemies, the Amalekites. He killed everyone except Agag, and sparing Agag proved to be his ruin. Caleb and Joshua entered God's promised rest because they 'wholly followed the Lord' (Numbers 14:24; 32:11-12; Deuteronomy 1:36; Joshua 14:6, 8-9, 14). Naaman's hypocrisy appeared in this: though he seemed greatly moved with gratitude toward God for healing his leprosy and committed to serving Him, he asked to be excused in one particular thing. Similarly, Herod feared John, observed him, heard him gladly, and did many things — yet was condemned because in one thing he refused to listen: he would not give up his beloved Herodias. It is therefore necessary that people part with their most cherished sins — those that are like their right hand and right eye, the sins that most easily entangle them and to which they are most exposed by their natural tendencies, long-standing habits, or particular circumstances — just as much as with any other sins. Just as Joseph would not make himself known to his brothers who had sold him until Benjamin — the beloved child of the family, the hardest to give up — was handed over, so Christ will not reveal His love to us until we part with our most beloved sins and are brought to comply with the most difficult duties, including those we are most reluctant to perform.

It is important to recognize that for a person to be truly called universally obedient, his obedience must not consist only in negatives — in avoiding sinful actions, sins of commission. He must

also be comprehensive in the positive duties of religion. Sins of omission are just as much violations of God's commands as sins of commission. In Matthew 25, Christ depicts those on the left hand as condemned to eternal fire for sins of omission: 'I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat,' and so on. A person cannot be said to be universally obedient and of a Christian manner of life simply because he is not a thief, an oppressor, a fraudulent dealer, a drunkard, a tavern regular, a whoremonger, a violent person, someone who wanders at night, someone impure in conduct, someone profane in speech, a slanderer, a liar, someone fierce or malicious or abusive. A person who goes only this far is wrongly described as living in a way that is consistent with the gospel. True gospel-consistent living requires also that he be serious, religious, devout, humble, meek, forgiving, peaceful, respectful, considerate, benevolent, merciful, charitable, and generous in his conduct and manner of life. Without such things, he is not obeying the laws of Christ — laws that Christ and His apostles insisted on repeatedly as being of the greatest importance and necessity.

Second, for people to be true Christians, they must pursue the business of religion and the service of God with great earnestness and diligence — as the work they have devoted themselves to and made the main business of their lives. All of Christ's own people not only do good works but 'are zealous for good works' (Titus 2:14). No one can serve two masters at once. Those who are truly God's servants give themselves over to His service and make it as it were their whole work, putting their whole heart and the best of their strength into it. As Philippians 3:13 says: 'This one thing I do.' In their effectual calling, Christians are not called to idleness but to labor in God's vineyard and to spend their days performing

a great and demanding service. All true Christians respond to this call — which is implied in it being an effectual call — and do the work of Christians. This work is throughout the New Testament compared to the most strenuous human efforts: running, wrestling, fighting. All true Christians are good and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ who 'fight the good fight of faith.' None but those who do so ever 'take hold of eternal life.' Those who 'fight as those beating the air' never win the crown of victory. 'In a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize' — and those who are slack and lazy in their course do not 'run in such a way as to win.' The kingdom of heaven is not taken without effort. Without earnestness, no one gets through that narrow way that leads to life — and therefore no one arrives at the glorious life and happiness it leads to. Without earnest labor, no one climbs the steep high hill of Zion — and therefore no one arrives at the heavenly city on its summit. Without constant, persevering effort, no one can push against the swift current we swim in and ever reach the fountain of the water of life at its source. We need to 'watch and pray always' in order to escape the terrible things coming upon the ungodly and to be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man. We need to 'put on the whole armor of God, and having done all, to stand,' in order to avoid being completely overthrown and destroyed by the fiery darts of the devil. We need to 'forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead, pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,' in order to obtain that prize. Laziness in the service of God, in those who profess to be His servants, is as damning as open rebellion. The 'wicked, lazy servant' will be cast into outer darkness among God's open enemies (Matthew 25:26, 28). The lazy are not 'imitators of those who

through faith and patience inherit the promises' (Hebrews 6:11-12): 'We desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' And all those who follow the 'great cloud of witnesses' who have gone before into heaven 'lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us' (Hebrews 12:1). True faith — by which people rely on the righteousness of Christ and the work He has done, and truly feed and live on Him — is always accompanied by this spirit of earnestness in the Christian life and calling. This was typified in the way the children of Israel ate the Passover lamb. They were directed to eat it as people in a hurry — with their belts fastened, their sandals on their feet, and their staff in hand (Exodus 12:11): 'Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste — it is the Lord's Passover.'

Third, every true Christian perseveres in this way of universal obedience and diligent, earnest service of God through all the various trials he encounters, to the end of life. That all true saints — all those who obtain eternal life — persevere in this way in religious practice and the service of God is a doctrine so thoroughly taught in Scripture that citing every relevant text would be endless. I will content myself with pointing to some in the margin.

The aspect of perseverance in obedience that Scripture especially emphasizes as a distinctive mark of true grace is this: that professors of religion continue in the practice of their duty and remain steadfast in a holy walk through the various trials they encounter.

By 'trials' I mean those things that occur and that a professor encounters in his course which make it especially difficult for him by nature to continue in his duty and in faithfulness to God. These things are called from time to time in Scripture by the name of 'trials' or 'temptations' — words that carry the same meaning. They are of various kinds. Many things make it difficult to continue in the way of duty by tending to feed and stir up a person's sinful desires and corruptions. Many things make it hard by their alluring and enticing character — by drawing people toward sin, or by loosening their restraints and emboldening them in wrongdoing. Other trials test the genuineness and steadfastness of professors by making their duty appear frightening, driving them away from it — such as the suffering their duty will expose them to: pain, ill will, contempt and insult, or loss of material possessions and comforts. If people who have made a profession of religion live any significant length of time in this world — which is so full of change and evil — it is inevitable that they will encounter many tests of their sincerity and steadfastness. Beyond this, it is God's way in His providence to bring trials upon His professing friends and servants intentionally, so that He may reveal them and present sufficient evidence of the state they are in — to their own consciences, and often to the world as well. This is evident from countless scriptures, some of which are referenced in the margin.

True saints may be guilty of various kinds and degrees of backsliding and may be tripped up by particular temptations and may fall into sin — even serious sin. But they can never fall away to the point of growing weary of religion and the service of God, habitually disliking it and neglecting it — whether because of religion itself or because of the difficulties that come with it. This is clear

from Galatians 6:9; Romans 2:7; Hebrews 10:36; Isaiah 43:22; and Malachi 1:13. They can never backslide to the point that they no longer walk in a way of universal obedience, or so that it is no longer their pattern to follow all the rules of Christianity and perform all required duties — even the most difficult ones and under the most difficult circumstances. This is abundantly established by what has already been observed. Nor can they ever fall away to the point where they are habitually more engaged in other things than in the business of religion — so that their settled way and pattern is to serve something else more than God, or so that they have ceased to serve God with the earnestness and diligence that characterize a person habitually devoted to the business of religion. This holds unless the words of Christ can be set aside — 'You cannot serve two masters' — and those of the apostle — 'Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God' — and unless a saint can change his God and still remain a true saint. Nor can a true saint ever fall away to the point where, ordinarily, there is no remarkable difference between his walk and behavior after his conversion and what it was before. Those who are truly converted are new men, new creatures — new not only inwardly but outwardly. They are sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body. Old things have passed away; all things have become new. They have new hearts, new eyes, new ears, new tongues, new hands, new feet — that is, a new manner of life and practice. They walk in newness of life and continue to do so to the end of their lives. Those who fall away and visibly cease to do this show by that very fact that they were never risen with Christ. It is an especially clear sign of hypocrisy when a person's belief that he has been converted and is therefore safe is itself the very cause of

his falling away. This is true whether the falling away is back into former sins or into some new kind of wickedness — the corruption of nature merely channeled in a new direction instead of being mortified. For example: when people who think themselves converted, though they do not openly return to former profaneness and immorality, yet because of the high opinion they hold of their experiences, graces, and privileges, gradually settle more and more into a self-righteous and spiritually proud spirit and into the kind of behavior and conduct that naturally flows from it. When it is this way with people, however far they may appear to have come from their former evil practices, this alone is enough to condemn them — and may leave them in a last state far worse than the first. This seems to be precisely the case of the generation of Jews that Christ describes in Matthew 12:43-45. Having been awakened by John the Baptist's preaching and brought to reform their former immoral ways — so that the unclean spirit was, as it were, driven out and the house swept and put in order — yet being empty of God and of grace, they became full of themselves, exalted in an extremely high opinion of their own righteousness and exceptional holiness, and settled into a correspondingly self-promoting way of life. They traded the sins of tax collectors and prostitutes for those of the Pharisees — and in the end had seven spirits worse than the first.

This explains what I mean by exercise and fruit when I say that gracious affections find their exercise and fruit in Christian practice.

The reason why gracious affections have this tendency and produce this effect is apparent from much that has already been observed in the earlier parts of this discussion.

The reason appears in this: gracious affections arise from spiritual operations and influences, and the inward principle from which they flow is something divine — a communication of God, a participation in the divine nature, Christ living in the heart, the Holy Spirit dwelling there in union with the faculties of the soul as an inward, living principle, expressing His own nature through the exercise of those faculties. This is sufficient to show why true grace should have such activity, power, and effectiveness. No wonder that what is divine is powerful and effective — it has omnipotence on its side. If God dwells in the heart and is vitally united to it, He will show that He is God by the effectiveness of His working. Christ is not in the heart of a saint as in a tomb, or as a dead Savior who does nothing. He is there as in His temple, as one who is alive from the dead. In the heart where Christ dwells savingly, He lives and exerts Himself in the power of that endless life He received at His resurrection. So every saint who benefits from Christ's sufferings is made to know and experience the power of His resurrection. The Spirit of Christ — the immediate source of grace in the heart — is all life, all power, all action (2 Corinthians 2:4: 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'; 1 Thessalonians 1:5: 'our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit'; 1 Corinthians 4:20: 'the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power'). Therefore, saving affections — though they often do not make as much noise and outward show as others — have within them a secret solidity, life, and strength by which they take hold of and carry away the heart, leading it into a kind of captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5), winning a full and firm commitment of the will to God and holiness. As Psalm 110:3 says: 'Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power.' This is how holy affec-

tions exercise a governing influence over the course of a person's life. A statue may look very much like a real man — even like a strong and active man — but it lacks an inward principle of life and strength. Therefore it does nothing, it accomplishes nothing, and there is no action to match the appearance. False spiritual discoveries and affections do not go deep enough to reach and govern the inner springs of a person's actions and practice. The seed in the rocky ground had no depth of soil, and the root did not go deep enough to bring forth fruit. But gracious affections go to the very bottom of the heart and take hold of the deepest springs of life and activity. Here chiefly appears the power of true godliness — in being effective in practice. This effectiveness of godliness is exactly what the apostle refers to when he speaks of 'the power of godliness' in 2 Timothy 3:5, as is plain from the context — he is describing how some professors of religion will notoriously fail in the practice of it, and in verse 5 he observes that in having such an ungodly practice they deny the power of godliness while still holding its outward form. The power of godliness is indeed first exercised within the soul — in the perceptible, lively exercise of gracious affections there. Yet the main evidence of this power of godliness is in those exercises of holy affections that are practical — in their being practical — in conquering the will, conquering the sinful desires and corruptions of people, and carrying people forward in the way of holiness through all temptation, difficulty, and opposition.

The reason why gracious affections find their expression and effect in Christian practice also appears from something already observed: the first and foundational object of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and lovable nature of divine things as they are in themselves — not any perceived relationship they have

to self or self-interest. This shows why holy affections will cause people to be holy in their practice comprehensively. What makes people partial in religion is that they seek themselves and not God in it — they embrace religion not for its own excellent nature but only to serve some personal purpose. A person who embraces religion only to serve a purpose will embrace no more of it than he thinks serves that purpose. But a person who embraces religion for its own excellent and lovely nature embraces everything that has that nature. The person who takes up religion for its own sake takes up the whole of religion. This also explains why gracious affections will cause people to practice religion persistently and at all times. Religion may change considerably over time in how it relates to a person's private interests in various ways — so the person who follows it only for selfish reasons is liable, when circumstances change, to abandon it. But the excellent nature of religion as it is in itself never changes. It is always the same — at all times and through all changes — it never alters in any respect.

The reason why gracious affections result in holy practice also further appears from the particular kind of excellence of divine things that, as observed, forms the foundation of all holy affection — namely their moral excellence, or the beauty of their holiness. No wonder that a love for holiness, for holiness's own sake, inclines people to practice holiness and to practice everything that is holy. Since holiness is the main thing that stirs, draws, and governs all gracious affections, no wonder all such affections tend toward holiness. What people love, they desire to have, to be united to, and to possess. The beauty that people delight in, they desire to be adorned with. The actions that people delight in, they are naturally inclined to do.

What has been observed about the divine teaching and leading of the Spirit of God that accompanies gracious affections also helps explain why such affections tend toward a universally holy practice. As already noted, the Spirit of God in this divine teaching and leading gives the soul a natural delight in the sweetness of what is holy — everything holy, as far as it comes into view — while producing a dislike and aversion to everything that is unholy.

The same also appears from what has been observed about the nature of spiritual knowledge — the foundation of all holy affection — as consisting in a sense and perception of an excellence in divine things that is supreme and transcendent. Through this perception, divine things appear worthy above all others of being chosen and held fast. By seeing the transcendent glory of Christ, true Christians see Him worthy to be followed, and are powerfully drawn after Him. They see Him worthy of forsaking everything for His sake. By seeing His surpassing beauty, they are thoroughly disposed to submit to Him, driven to labor with earnestness and energy in His service, and made willing to go through all difficulties for Him. And it is this discovery of the divine excellence of Christ that makes them constant and faithful to Him. It makes such a deep impression on their minds that they cannot forget Him. They will follow Him wherever He goes, and no effort to draw them away from Him will succeed.

The practical tendency and fruit of gracious affections is further explained by what has been observed about such affections being attended by a thorough conviction of the mind of the reality and certainty of divine things. No wonder that those who were never thoroughly convinced that there is any reality in the things of religion will never put in the effort and trouble of such earnest,

comprehensive, and persevering practice of religion — through all difficulties, self-denials, and sufferings — in reliance on what they are not convinced of. On the other hand, those who are thoroughly convinced of the certain truth of those things must necessarily be governed by them in their practice. The things revealed in God's Word are so great and so infinitely more important than all other things that it is inconsistent with human nature for a person to fully believe their truth and not be influenced by them above all else in his conduct.

The reason for this expression and effect of holy affections in practice also appears from what has been observed about the change of nature that accompanies such affections. Without a change of nature, a person's practice will not be thoroughly changed. Until the tree is made good, the fruit will not be good. People do not gather grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles. A pig may be washed and look clean for a while — but without a change of nature it will return to wallowing in the mud. Nature is a more powerful force of action than anything that opposes it. Though it may be forcibly restrained for a time, it will ultimately overcome whatever restrains it. It is like the current of a river — it may be held back for a while by a dam, but if nothing is done to dry up the source, it will not be stopped forever. It will find a channel, either the old one or a new one. Nature is more lasting and permanent than any of the things on which carnal people build their reform and outward righteousness. When a natural person denies his sinful desires and lives a strict, religious life — appearing humble, hardworking, and earnest in religion — it is not natural to him. It is all a force working against his nature, like a stone violently thrown upward. That force will gradually spend itself, while the

nature remains at full strength and ultimately prevails — and the stone falls back down. As long as corrupt nature is not mortified but the principle is left intact in the person, it is futile to expect that it will not eventually govern. But if the old nature is truly mortified and a new, heavenly nature infused, then it is fully reasonable to expect that people will walk in newness of life and continue to do so to the end of their days.

The reason for this practical exercise and effect of holy affections can also partly be seen from what has been observed about the spirit of humility that accompanies them. Humility is much of what a spirit of obedience consists in. A proud spirit is a rebellious spirit, but a humble spirit is yielding, submissive, and obedient. We see this among people: the servant who is arrogant is not inclined to be submissive and obedient to his master in every matter — but it is different with the servant who is of a humble spirit.

And the gentle, dove-like spirit that has been described — which accompanies all gracious affections — fulfills, as the apostle observes in Romans 13:8-10 and Galatians 5:14, all the duties of the second table of the law. This is the very substance of Christian practice, and the heart of what external Christian conduct consists in.

The reason why gracious affections are attended by the strict, comprehensive, and constant obedience already described is further illuminated by what has been observed about the tenderness of spirit that accompanies the affections of true saints. This tenderness makes them quickly and sharply feel pain at the presence of moral evil and gives them a deep dread of anything that even resembles evil.

One great reason why the Christian practice that flows from gracious affections is comprehensive, constant, and persevering appears from what has been observed about those affections themselves — the fact that they are comprehensive and constant, covering all kinds of holy activities, directed toward all proper objects, operating in all circumstances and at all times, in a beautiful symmetry and proportion.

Much of the reason why holy affections express themselves in such earnestness, energy, engagement, and perseverance in holy practice appears from what has been observed about the spiritual appetite and longing for further growth in religion that always accompanies true affection — and which does not fade as those affections increase, but grows along with them.

We see, then, how the tendency of holy affections toward the kind of Christian practice that has been described is rooted in each of the distinguishing characteristics of holy affection discussed throughout this work.

This point can be further illustrated and confirmed by recognizing that Scripture abundantly places sincerity and genuineness in religion in making a full choice of God as our only Lord and portion — forsaking all for Him — and in a firm commitment of the will to God and Christ after counting the cost. It involves the heart embracing the religion of Jesus Christ with everything that belongs to it, including all its difficulties — in effect treating even our dearest earthly pleasures and our own lives as secondary for Christ's sake. It means giving ourselves, with all that we have, wholly and permanently to Christ, holding nothing back and making no exceptions. In a word, it consists in the great duty of self-denial for Christ — denying and, as it were, disowning and renouncing our-

selves for Him, making ourselves nothing so that He may be everything. Surely having a heart to forsake all for Christ tends toward actually forsaking all for Him, to the extent that occasion and trial arise. Having a heart to deny ourselves for Christ tends toward actually denying ourselves in practice whenever Christ and self-interest are in competition. Giving ourselves over to God in our hearts, holding nothing back, tends to behaving in every respect as belonging to Him — subject to His will and devoted to His purposes. Our hearts fully embracing the religion of Jesus — with all that belongs to it, including all its difficulties, after deliberately counting the cost — tends toward fully embracing the same in action and practice, actually going through all the difficulties we meet in the way of religion, and thereby holding on with patience and perseverance.

The tendency of grace in the heart toward holy practice is very direct, and the connection is natural, close, and necessary. True grace is not an inactive thing. Nothing in heaven or earth is more active by nature, for it is life itself — and the most active kind of life: spiritual and divine life. It is not a barren thing. Nothing in the universe is by nature more fruitful. Godliness in the heart bears the same direct relationship to practice as a fountain bears to the stream it feeds, as the luminous nature of the sun bears to the rays it sends out, as life bears to breathing and the beating of the pulse and every other vital action, as a settled disposition or principle bears to action. For it is the very nature of grace that it is a principle of holy action and practice. Regeneration — the work of God by which grace is infused — has a direct relationship to practice, for practice is the very purpose of regeneration, the end for which the whole work is carried out. Everything in this mighty and manifold

change wrought in the soul is arranged to tend directly toward this end (Ephesians 2:10): 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.' Indeed, holy practice is the very purpose of Christ's redemption (Titus 2:14): 'Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.' 2 Corinthians 5:15: 'He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.' Hebrews 9:14: 'How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Colossians 1:21-22: 'And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.' 1 Peter 1:18: 'Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life...' Luke 1:74-75: '...that He would grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.' God repeatedly describes holy practice as the purpose of that great historical redemption — Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Exodus 4:23: 'Let my son go, that he may serve Me.' The same point appears in Exodus 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; and 10:3. Holy practice is also declared to be the purpose of election (John 15:16): 'You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.' Ephesians 1:4: 'He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.' Chapter 2:10: 'Created

in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.' Holy practice is as much the purpose of everything God does for His saints as fruit is the purpose of everything a farmer does with his field or vineyard — as Scripture repeatedly represents (Matthew 3:10; 13:8, 23, 24-30, 38; 21:19, 33-34; Luke 13:6; John 15:1-2, 4-6, 8; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Hebrews 6:7-8; Isaiah 5:1-8; Song of Solomon 8:11-12; Isaiah 27:2-3). Therefore everything in a true Christian is directed toward this end. This fruit of holy practice is what every grace, every spiritual discovery, and every element of Christian experience tends directly toward.

The constant and unbreakable connection in true saints between a Christian inner principle, outward profession, and the fruit of holy practice in their lives was prefigured in the design of the golden lampstand in the temple. It is beyond doubt that the golden lampstand with its seven branches and seven lamps was a type of the church of Christ. The Holy Spirit Himself has settled the matter by representing His church as a golden lampstand with seven lamps in Zechariah 4, and by representing the seven churches of Asia as seven golden lampstands in Revelation 1. The golden lampstand in the temple was throughout its entire structure made with buds and flowers (Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-24). The word translated 'bud' or 'knop' in the original refers to an apple or pomegranate. A bud and a flower, a bud and a flower — wherever there was a flower, there was a fruit alongside it. Flower and fruit were constantly connected, without exception. The flower contained the principle of the fruit and a beautiful, promising appearance of it — and the appearance was never deceptive. The principle or promise of fruit was always accompanied or followed by real fruit. So it is in the church of Christ: there is the inward principle

of fruit — grace in the heart. There is a lovely profession of faith, represented by the open flowers of the lampstand. And there is the corresponding fruit — holy practice — constantly accompanying this principle and profession. Every branch of the golden lampstand, composed of golden fruit and flowers, was crowned with a burning, shining lamp at its top. This is how the saints shine as lights in the world — by making a good and genuine profession of religion, and having that profession consistently accompanied by corresponding fruit in practice. This fits with what our Savior says in Matthew 5:15-16: 'Nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' A beautiful and genuine profession, accompanied by golden fruit — these together are the fitting ornaments of the true church of Christ. This is why fruits and flowers were not only the ornaments of the lampstand in the temple but of the temple itself — which is a type of the church, which the apostle tells us 'is the temple of the living God.' See 1 Kings 6:18: 'And the cedar of the house within was carved with gourds and open flowers.' The ornaments and capitals of the pillars at the entrance of the temple were of the same kind — lilies and pomegranates, flowers and fruits mingled together (1 Kings 7:18-19). So it is with all those who are 'pillars in the temple of God, who will go out from it no more' — that is, all true saints who will never be cast out as intruders (Revelation 3:12): 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore.'

Much the same thing seems to be represented by the ornaments on the hem of the ephod — the garment of Aaron the high priest. These ornaments were golden bells and pomegranates. That the hem of Aaron's garment represents the church, or the saints (who are as it were the garment of Christ), is evident from Psalm 133:1-2: 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the hem of his garments.' Aaron's ephod signified the same thing as the seamless coat of Christ our great high priest. As Christ's coat had no seam but was woven in one piece from top to bottom, so it was with the ephod (Exodus 39:22). As God in His providence ensured that Christ's coat was not torn, so He took special care that the ephod should not be torn (Exodus 28:32; 39:23). The golden bells on this ephod, by their precious material and pleasant sound, fittingly represent the good profession the saints make. The pomegranates represent the fruit they bear. Just as on the hem of the ephod bells and pomegranates were constantly paired — 'a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate' (Exodus 28:34; 39:26) — so it is with the true saints: their good profession and their good fruit constantly accompany one another. The fruit they bring forth in life always corresponds to the pleasant sound of their profession.

The very same thing is represented by Christ in His description of His bride in Song of Solomon 7:2: 'Your belly is like a heap of wheat fenced about with lilies.' Here again are beautiful flowers and good fruit together. The lilies were fair and lovely flowers, and the wheat was good fruit.

Just as this fruit of Christian practice is consistently present in true saints whenever they have the occasion and the trial, so it is found in them alone. No one but true Christians lives such an obedient life — so completely devoted to their duty and given up to the business of being a Christian, as described above. All unsanctified people are workers of iniquity. They are of their father the devil, and they carry out their father's desires. No hypocrite will see the business of religion through to the end and both begin and complete the tower. They will not endure the trials God typically brings upon professors of religion, but will turn aside into their crooked ways. They will not be thoroughly faithful to Christ in their practice and follow Him wherever He goes. No matter how far they may go in religion in some areas, and however strict and intensely engaged in the service of God they may appear for a season, they are still servants to sin. The chains of their old master are not broken. Their sinful desires still have a ruling power in their hearts — and to those masters they will bow down again. Daniel 12:10: 'Many will be purged, made white and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand.' Isaiah 26:10: 'Though the wicked is shown favor, he does not learn righteousness; he deals unjustly in the land of uprightness.' Isaiah 35:8: 'A highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it.' Hosea 14:9: 'The ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.' Job 27:8-10: 'What is the hope of the godless when he is cut off... Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he call on God at all times?' An unsanctified person may hide his sin and may refrain from sin in many things and for a season — but he will never be finally brought to re-

nounce his sin and give it a bill of divorce. Sin is too dear to him for that. As Job 20:12-13 says: 'Wickedness is sweet in his mouth; he hides it under his tongue. He does not let it go but holds it in his mouth.' This is what chiefly makes the gate narrow and the way difficult that leads to life — the reason worldly people will not enter it: it is a way of utterly renouncing and finally forsaking all ungodliness, a way of self-denial and self-renunciation.

Many unconverted people, when God is working on them and striving to bring them to forsake their sins, treat their sins the way Pharaoh treated the pride and greed he gratified by keeping the Israelites in bondage — when God was pressing him to let the people go. When God's hand pressed Pharaoh hard and he was gripped by fears of God's coming wrath, he entertained thoughts of releasing the people and promised to do it. But he broke his promise again and again whenever he saw a moment of relief. When God filled Egypt with thunder and lightning and fire running along the ground, Pharaoh was brought to confess his sin with apparent humility and made a firm resolution to let the people go (Exodus 9:27-28): 'Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and said to them, "I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones. Make supplication to the Lord, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer."' In the same way, sinners are sometimes brought by the thunders and lightning of the law — its great terrors — to an apparent work of humiliation and a seeming willingness to part with their sins. But they are no more genuinely disposed to give them up than Pharaoh was to let the people go. In the struggle between his conscience and his desires, Pharaoh was looking for a way to let God be served while still keeping the bene-

fit he got from enslaving the people. Moses insisted that Israel's God must be served and sacrificed to — and Pharaoh was willing to agree, as long as it did not require releasing the people. 'Go, sacrifice to your God within the land,' he said (Exodus 8:25). Many sinners likewise try to arrange a life where they serve God and keep their sins too. Moses objected that serving God while remaining in Egypt under their taskmasters was contradictory — the two could not go together. There is no serving God while remaining slaves to His enemies at the same time. After this, Pharaoh consented to let the people go, provided they not go far away. He was unwilling to let them go for good and wanted them within reach. Many hypocrites deal with their sins the same way. Later, Pharaoh agreed to let the men go if they would leave the women and children behind (Exodus 10:8-10). Then, when God's hand pressed harder still, he agreed that women and children could go too — provided they leave their livestock behind. But he would not let them go with everything they had (Exodus 10:24). So it often is with sinners. They are willing to give up some sins but not all. They are brought to put away the more obvious acts of sin but not to abandon their sinful desires in their lesser indulgences. Yet we must part with all our sins, great and small, and everything that belongs to them — men, women, children, and cattle. Everything must be let go: young and old, sons and daughters, flocks and herds — not a hoof must be left behind. This is what Moses told Pharaoh regarding the children of Israel. In the end, when it reached the extreme point, Pharaoh did consent to let everyone go with all they had — but he was not steadfastly of that mind. He soon changed course and pursued them again. The reason was that the pride and greed satisfied by his dominion over the people and the profit of their labor had

never been truly put to death in him — they had only been violently restrained. Because of this backsliding after his apparent compliance with God's commands, he was destroyed without remedy. This is how it can happen that someone may appear to have made a total break with disobedience to God's commands — appearing comprehensive as far as anyone can see, for a brief season. But because it is merely forced compliance, without the mortification of the inward principle of sin, it will not last. They return as a dog to its vomit and bring on themselves dreadful and irremediable destruction. There were many false disciples in Christ's time who followed Him for a while — but none of them followed Him to the end. One by one, on one occasion or another, they turned back and walked with Him no more.

From what has been said, it is clear that Christian practice — a holy life — is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace. But I may go further and assert that it is the chief of all the signs of grace, both as evidence of the sincerity of professors to others and as evidence to their own consciences.

But it is necessary that this be understood correctly — that we be clear about in what sense and manner Christian practice is the greatest sign of grace. To set this matter in a clear light, I will carefully and specifically demonstrate that Christian practice is the primary sign by which Christians are to judge both their own and others' sincerity in godliness, while noting some things that must be kept in mind for a right understanding of this.

First, I will consider Christian practice and a holy life as a demonstration and sign of the sincerity of a professing Christian to the eyes of his neighbors and fellow believers.

That Christian practice is the chief sign of grace in this respect is very clear from the Word of God. Christ, who knew best how to give us rules for judging others, repeated and emphasized that we should know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16): 'You will know them by their fruits.' Then, after arguing the point and giving clear reasons why a person's fruits must be the main evidence of what kind of person they are, He closes by repeating the statement in verse 20: 'So then, you will know them by their fruits.' Again, in Matthew 12:33: 'Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad.' This is as much as to say: it is utterly absurd to suppose the tree is good while the fruit is bad, or that the tree is one kind while its fruit is another — for the proper evidence of what kind of tree it is comes from its fruit. The last clause of that verse — 'for the tree is known by its fruit' — means nothing less than that the tree is chiefly known by its fruit, that this is the main and most fitting diagnostic by which one tree is distinguished from another. So also Luke 6:44: 'For each tree is known by its own fruit.' Christ nowhere says, 'You will know the tree by its leaves or blossoms,' or 'You will know people by their talk,' or 'You will know them by the good account they give of their experiences,' or 'You will know them by the way they speak or the emphasis and feeling in their voice,' or 'by speaking feelingly,' or 'by making a great show through many words, many tears, or many affectionate expressions,' or 'by the feelings they stir in your heart toward them.' He says: 'By their fruits you will know them; the tree is known by its fruit; every tree is known by its own fruit.' And just as this is the evidence Christ has directed us to look at in others when judging them, so it is the evidence Christ has directed us to give to others so that they may judge us (Matthew 5:16): 'Let

your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' Here Christ tells us how to make our godliness known to others. Godliness is a light that shines in the soul — Christ intends that this light should not only shine within but should shine outward before people so they can see it. But how is this to be done? Through our good works. Christ does not say, 'that others hearing your good words, your good account, or your heartfelt expressions' — but 'that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father who is in heaven.' Surely when Christ gives us a rule for how to make our light shine so that others may have evidence of it, His rule is the best available. The apostles too point to Christian practice as the primary basis for their confidence in persons as true Christians. Consider the apostle Paul in Hebrews 6. There, at the start of the chapter, he speaks of those who have had great common spiritual experiences — 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 age to come' — who then fall away and are like barren ground 'close to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.' Then immediately in verse 9, expressing his confidence that the Hebrew Christians had the saving grace that surpasses all these common experiences, he adds: 'But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.' In the very next verse he explains why he had such a good opinion of them. He does not say it was because they had given him a good account of God's work in their souls and spoke very experimentally. It was their work and labor of love: 'For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have

shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.' The same apostle speaks of faithful service to God in practice as the proper proof to others that someone loves Christ above all and puts His honor above personal interest (Philippians 2:21-22): 'For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.' The apostle John expresses the same, giving it as the basis for his good opinion of Gaius (3 John 3-6): 'For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.' But how did the brothers testify to the truth that was in Gaius? And how did the apostle judge of the truth in him? It was not because they testified that he had given a good account of the steps of his experience and had the very language of a Christian. They testified 'that he walked in the truth, even as you walk in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church.' That is how the apostle explains what the brothers had testified to when they 'came and testified to his walking in the truth.' The apostle also seems in this same passage to give Gaius a rule for judging others. In verse 10 he mentions a man named Diotrephes who behaved badly and led others astray. In verse 11 he directs Gaius to beware of such people and not to follow them, and gives him a rule exactly in line with the rule Christ had given: 'By their fruits you will know them.' The apostle says: 'Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.' And I would further

note that the apostle James, explicitly comparing the way of demonstrating faith to others by practice and works with the way of showing faith without works, clearly and thoroughly prefers the former (James 2:18): 'But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."' Manifesting our faith 'without works,' or in a way other than works, is manifesting it in words — a verbal profession of faith. As the apostle says in verse 14: 'What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith?' So there are two ways of making known to our neighbor what is in our hearts: by what we say, and by what we do. The apostle thoroughly prefers the latter as the better evidence. Now certainly, all the accounts we give of ourselves in words — saying we have faith, saying we are converted, telling the manner in which we came to faith, describing the steps by which it was worked in us, and recounting the discoveries and experiences that accompanied it — are still only showing our faith by what we say, by our words. And the apostle makes clear that this falls vastly short of demonstrating faith by what we do and showing our faith by our works.

Just as Scripture clearly teaches that practice is the best evidence of the sincerity of professing Christians, reason teaches the same thing. Reason shows that what people do is a more reliable interpreter of what is in their hearts than what they say. The common sense of all people, throughout all ages and nations, leads them to judge people's hearts chiefly by their conduct in practical matters — whether a man is a loyal subject, a true friend, a dutiful child, or a faithful servant. If a man professes great love and friendship toward another, reason teaches everyone that such a profession is not as strong evidence of genuine friendship as actu-

ally showing friendship in deeds — being faithful and constant to a friend in prosperity and adversity, ready to exert himself and sacrifice his own interests to do him a kindness. A wise person will trust such evidence of the sincerity of friendship more than a thousand earnest declarations and heartfelt expressions of friendship in words. There is equal reason why practice should also be seen as the best evidence of friendship toward Christ. Reason says the same thing that Christ said in John 14:21: 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.' If we see a person who in the course of his life follows and imitates Christ, exerting himself greatly and denying himself for the honor of Christ and the advancement of His kingdom in the world, reason teaches that this is a more trustworthy evidence of love to Christ than a man merely saying he has love to Christ and describing the inward experiences he has had of it — telling of the strong love he felt and how his heart was drawn out at such and such a time — when in his behavior there appears little imitation of Christ, and he seems reluctant to do anything great for Him or to put himself out for the promotion of His kingdom, and tends to make excuses whenever he is called to deny himself for Christ. So also: if a man in telling of his experiences says how he found his heart weaned from the world and saw its vanity, so that everything looked like nothing to him at certain times, and he professes to give everything up to God and calls heaven and earth to witness it — but in his practice is aggressive in pursuing worldly gain, holds tightly to whatever he acquires, and is extremely reluctant to part with much of it for charitable and godly purposes (so that it comes from him almost like his own blood) — — while another professing Christian says much less, yet in his behavior appears ready at all times to let go of the

world whenever it conflicts with his duty, and is free to part with it at any time to advance religion and the good of others — reason teaches that the latter gives far more credible evidence of a heart weaned from the world. If a man appears to walk humbly before God and people, with a manner that reflects a broken heart — patient and submissive to God under suffering, meek in his dealings with others — this is better evidence of true humility than if a person only tells how deep a sense he had of his own unworthiness, how he was brought to lie in the dust and was emptied of himself and saw himself as nothing and utterly corrupt — and yet acts as if he considers himself one of the first and greatest of saints, by right the leader of all the Christians in town, and is domineering, self-willed, and unable to bear the slightest contradiction. In such a case we may be sure the man's practice comes from a deeper and more reliable place than his profession. So also — to give no more examples — if a professing Christian shows in his behavior a compassionate and tender spirit toward others in hardship, ready to bear their burdens with them, willing to spend his resources for them, and to accept personal inconveniences in order to promote the good of others in body and soul: is this not a more credible evidence of love for people than a man merely telling what love he felt for others at certain times — how he pitied their souls, how his soul labored for them, and how he felt sincere love and pity even for his enemies — when in his behavior he appears very self-serving, tight-fisted and greedy, all for himself and nothing for his neighbors, and perhaps envious and contentious? In a burst of feeling, people may think they have a heart willing to do and suffer great things — and may sincerely and confidently profess it — when in reality their hearts are far from it. Many in such emotional

moments have believed themselves willing to be condemned forever for the glory of God. Passing emotions easily produce words, and words are cheap. Godliness is more easily faked in words than in actions. Christian practice is a costly, demanding thing. The self-denial required of Christians, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life, do not consist in words but in practice. Hypocrites can far more easily be brought to talk like saints than to live like saints.

It is plain, then, that Christian practice is the best sign and demonstration of the genuine godliness of a professing Christian to the eyes of his neighbors.

But the following things should be carefully noted so that this matter may be rightly understood.

First, it must be noted that when Scripture speaks of Christian practice as the best evidence to others of sincerity and genuine grace, a profession of Christianity is not excluded but assumed. The rules given were rules Christ gave to His followers to guide their thinking about professing Christians — those who presented themselves as members of the Christian community — so they could judge the truth of their claims and the sincerity of the profession they made. They were not rules for evaluating those who made no claim to Christianity at all, with whom Christians had nothing to do. This is as plain as can be in the great rule Christ gives in Matthew 7: 'By their fruits you will know them.' There He gives a rule for how to judge those who professed to be Christians — indeed who made a very high profession. He calls them 'false prophets who come in sheep's clothing' in verse 15. The same is true of the apostle James in chapter 2:18: 'Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'

Both parties offering to give these different kinds of evidence are clearly professors of faith — this is implied by their both offering to give evidence of a faith they have professed. And it is evident from the verses before it that the apostle is addressing those who profess faith in Jesus Christ. It is equally plain that the apostle John, in the passages noted in his third letter, is addressing professing Christians. So although in these rules the Christian practice of professors is presented as the greatest and most distinguishing sign of the sincerity of their profession — far more evidential than the profession itself — a profession of Christianity is plainly assumed. The profession is not the main or distinguishing part of the evidence, yet it is a required and necessary component. It is like having a human body: that alone does not distinguish a person from other creatures and is not the main evidence of human nature — yet it is a required and necessary element of that evidence. Therefore, if a man plainly says he is not a Christian and does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God or a person sent from God, the rules of Christ and His apostles do not oblige us at all to regard him as a sincere Christian, whatever his visible practice and moral virtues may be. And these rules apply not only to the case of a man who explicitly denies Christianity — whether he be a professed deist, Jew, pagan, or open unbeliever — but also to a man who simply refrains from making any profession of Christianity at all. These rules were given only to help judge professing Christians. Fruit must be joined with visible flowers; bells and pomegranates go together.

But this naturally raises the question: when may a person be said to profess Christianity — what kind of profession can properly be called a profession of Christianity?

I answer in two parts.

First, for a person to properly be said to make a profession of Christianity, he must undoubtedly profess everything that is necessary to being a Christian — that is, everything that belongs to the essence of Christianity. Whatever is essential to Christianity itself is essential to the profession of Christianity. The profession must be of the very thing professed. To profess Christianity is to declare that one has it. Therefore, whatever belongs to a thing as necessary for it to truly be called that thing is also essential to the declaration of that thing — essential for the declaration to rightly be called a declaration of that thing. If we take only part of Christianity and leave out something that is essential to it, what we take is not Christianity, because something of its essence is missing. So if we profess only part and leave out something essential, what we profess is not Christianity. Thus in order to profess Christianity, we must profess that we believe Jesus is the Messiah — because such belief is essential to Christianity. We must also profess, either explicitly or implicitly, that Jesus made satisfaction for our sins, and hold the other essential doctrines of the gospel, since belief in these is also essential to Christianity. But there are other things just as essential to religion as orthodox belief — and it is therefore equally necessary that we profess them for our profession to truly be called a profession of Christianity. For example, it is essential to Christianity that we repent of our sins; that we are convicted of our own sinfulness; that we sense that we have rightly deserved God's wrath; that our hearts renounce all sin; that we embrace Christ with our whole hearts as our only Savior; that we love Him above all and are willing for His sake to forsake all; and that we give ourselves over to be entirely and permanently His. Such things belong

to the essence of Christianity just as much as belief in any of the doctrines of the gospel, and the profession of them belongs just as much to a Christian profession. This does not mean that to be a professing Christian one must make an explicit verbal profession of every individual element of Christian grace or virtue. But there must certainly be a profession, either express or implied, of what is of the essence of religion. As for what Christians should express in their profession, we ought to be guided by the commands of God's Word and by scriptural examples of the public professions of religion that God's people have made from time to time. They ought to profess repentance from sin. In earlier times, when people were initiated as professors of faith, they came confessing their sins and showing their sorrow for sin (Matthew 3:6). The baptism they received was called 'a baptism of repentance' (Mark 1:4). And John, after baptizing them, urged them to 'bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance' (Matthew 3:8) — that is, fruit consistent with the repentance they had professed — and encouraged them that if they did so, they would escape the coming wrath and be gathered as wheat into God's storehouse (Matthew 3:7-10, 12). So also the apostle Peter says to the Jews in Acts 2:38: 'Repent, and each of you be baptized.' This shows that repentance is a visible qualification required for baptism, and therefore must be publicly professed. And when the Jews returning from captivity formally re-entered the covenant, they did so with confession — a public profession of repentance for their sins (Nehemiah 9:2). This profession of repentance should include or imply a profession of conviction that God would be just in condemning us — see Nehemiah 9:33 along with verse 35 and the beginning of the following chapter. They should profess their faith in Jesus Christ — that they em-

brace Christ and rely on Him as their Savior with their whole hearts, and that they joyfully receive the gospel of Christ. Philip required the Ethiopian to profess that he 'believed with all his heart' before baptizing him. And those received as visible Christians at the great outpouring of the Spirit that began at Pentecost 'gladly received the word' (Acts 2:41): 'So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.' They should profess that they rely only on Christ's righteousness and strength, that they are devoted to Him as their only Lord and Savior, and that they rejoice in Him as their only righteousness and portion. It is foretold that all nations will be brought publicly to make this profession (Isaiah 45:22 to the end): 'Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, "Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength." Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. In the Lord all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory.' They should profess giving themselves over entirely to Christ and to God through Him — as the children of Israel publicly acknowledged their covenant with God (Deuteronomy 26:17): 'You have today declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice.' They ought to profess a willingness of heart to embrace religion with all its difficulties, and to walk in a way of universal and persevering obedience to God (Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7; Deuteronomy 26:16-18; 2 Kings 23:3; Nehemiah 10:28-29; Psalm 119:57, 106). They ought to profess

that their whole heart and soul is engaged in these commitments to belong to the Lord and to serve Him forever (2 Chronicles 15:12-14). God's people swearing to God — swearing by or to His name, which seems to signify solemnly giving themselves over to Him in covenant, vowing to receive Him as their God and to be entirely His in obedience and service — is spoken of as a duty to be performed by all of God's visible people (Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20; Psalm 63:11; Isaiah 19:18; 45:23-24 compared with Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10-11; Isaiah 48:1-2; 65:15-16; Jeremiah 4:2; 5:7; 12:16; Hosea 4:15; 10:4). Therefore, in order for people to be given full recognition and charitable regard by their neighbors as sincere professors of Christianity — by the rules of Christ and His apostles mentioned above — there must be a visibly holy life joined with a profession that either explicitly states or plainly implies such things as have been described. We are to 'know them by their fruits' — that is, we are to know by their fruits whether they are what they profess to be. We are not to conclude from their fruits that they have something in them that they don't even claim to have.

Furthermore,

Second, the profession of Christianity that must be joined with Christian practice — in order for people to be entitled to the benefit of these rules — must be made, as far as can be seen, with understanding. That is, the people must appear to have been sufficiently instructed in the principles of religion to be in a normal position to understand the proper meaning of what they express in their profession. For sounds are no declaration of anything beyond what the speaker understands them to mean.

But for people to make a proper profession of Christianity — such as Scripture directs and such as the followers of Christ should require before fully receiving professors into their fellowship — it is not necessary that they give an account of the particular steps and method by which the Holy Spirit, in their experience, worked and brought about those essential things of Christianity in their hearts. There is no trace in Scripture of the apostles or early ministers and Christians requiring any such account in order to receive and treat others as Christian brothers and sisters in every sense — no trace of examining people about the specific method and order of their experiences. What was required was a profession of the things that had been worked in them — not an account of the manner of that working. Nor is there the slightest hint of any such practice in the church of God from Adam to the death of the apostle John.

I am not saying that it is unnecessary for people to give any account at all of their experience to their fellow believers. For people to profess those things in which the essence of Christianity lies is the same as professing that they experience those things. When people solemnly profess — with a sense and full conviction of their own utter sinfulness, misery, and helplessness; of their justly deserving God's rejection and eternal wrath without mercy; and of the complete inadequacy of their own righteousness or anything in themselves to satisfy divine justice or commend them to God's favor — that they rely only and entirely on the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning work and righteousness; that they believe with all their hearts the truth of the gospel of Christ; that with a full conviction and sense of His sufficiency and perfect excellence as Savior as exhibited in the gospel, they cleave with their whole souls

to Him and rest in Him as the refuge and peace of their souls and the source of their comfort; that they repent of their sins and utterly renounce all sin; that they give themselves wholly to Christ, willingly submitting to Him as their King, giving Him their hearts and their whole selves; that they are willing and resolved to have God as their entire and everlasting portion; and in dependence on His promises of a future eternal enjoyment of Him in heaven, they renounce all the enjoyments of this passing world — selling everything for this great treasure and future inheritance — and to comply with every command of God, even the most difficult and self-denying, devoting their whole lives to God's service; and that in forgiving those who have wronged them, and with genuine goodwill toward all people, their hearts are joined to the people of Jesus Christ as their own people, to hold fast to them and love them as brothers and sisters, and to worship and serve God and follow Christ in union and fellowship with them, being willing and resolved to perform all the duties that belong to them as members of the same family of God and the mystical body of Christ — when people solemnly profess such things as these, in the presence of God, they are in effect professing that they are conscious of, or do experience, these things in their hearts.

Nor do I suppose that when people give an account of particular exercises of grace with the times and circumstances of them, this gives no advantage to others in forming a judgment of their state — or that people may not appropriately be asked about these things in certain cases, especially in cases of great importance where every possible assurance of a person's godliness is especially desired and sought, as in the case of ordaining or approving a minister. Such an account may give advantage in forming a judgment

in several respects, including this: it may give us better reason to believe that the professor speaks honestly and with genuine understanding of what he professes, and that he is not making the profession merely out of habit. For a profession of Christianity to be accepted as meaningful, there ought to be good reason from the circumstances of the profession to think that the person is not making it merely out of customary compliance with a prescribed form — using words without any clear meaning, or in a very loose and vague way, as confessions of faith are often signed. There should be reason to believe the professor is honestly and understandingly expressing what he is conscious of in his own heart. Without this, his profession has no real meaning and is no more significant than the sound of things without life. But whatever advantage an account of particular experiences may give in judging of this, it must be acknowledged that the professor having been previously well instructed by his teachers, and giving good evidence of sufficient knowledge, together with a practice consistent with his profession, is the best evidence of all.

Nor do I suppose that if a person who is asked about particular occasions, times, and circumstances of his Christian experience seems able to give a clear account of the manner of his first conversion — in a pattern that has frequently been observable in true conversions, where things appear to have followed one another distinctly and in order, both in time and in their natural sequence — this is not a circumstance that, among other things, adds weight to the evidence he gives his fellow believers of the truth of his experience.

What I am calling unscriptural is the insistence on a detailed account of the specific steps and sequence by which the Spirit of God was perceived to work in first bringing the soul into a state of salvation, as a requirement for receiving a professor into full Christian fellowship — or treating the absence of such an account as reason to discount other things in the evidence persons give their neighbors of their Christianity that are vastly more important and essential.

Second, to rightly understand how Christian practice is the greatest evidence others can have of the sincerity of a professing Christian, it is necessary to keep in mind what was said earlier about what Christian practice actually is — and to consider how far this can be visible to others. The fact that a professor of Christianity is what is commonly called an honest man or a moral man — meaning we have no specific transgression or wrongdoing to charge him with that would stain his character — is not great evidence of the sincerity of his profession. This is not 'making his light shine before men.' This is not the 'work and labor of love shown toward Christ's name' that gave the apostle such confidence in the sincerity of the professing Hebrews (Hebrews 6:9-10). It may be that we see nothing in a man to prevent his being a good man — nothing in his life and behavior inconsistent with godliness — yet there may be no great positive evidence that he is godly. But there may be great positive evidence of holiness in people's visible behavior. Their life may appear to be a life of service to God. They may appear to follow the example of Jesus Christ and come close to those excellent rules in Matthew 5-7 and Romans 12 and many other parts of the New Testament. There may be a great appearance of universal obedience to Christ's commands and the rules of

the gospel. They may appear universal in the duties of the first table — showing the fear and love of God — and also universal in following the rules of love for people: love for fellow believers, love for enemies, meekness and forgiveness, mercy and generosity, looking not only to their own interests but also to the interests of others, doing good to people's souls and bodies, to particular individuals and to the community, temperance and mortification of sin, humble conduct, and controlling the tongue and using it to glorify God and bless others — showing that the law of kindness governs what they say. They may appear to walk as Christians in all settings and at all times — in God's house and in their families, among their neighbors, on Sundays and every day, in business and in conversation, toward friends and enemies, toward those above them and below them and beside them. Their visible conduct may show them to be earnestly engaged in the service of God and others — laboring much and giving themselves to the work of a Christian, constant and steadfast in it under all circumstances and temptations. There may be great evidence of a spirit willing to deny themselves and to suffer for God and Christ and the interests of religion and the good of their fellow believers. There may be great evidence in a person's behavior of a disposition to give up anything rather than give up Christ, and to let everything yield to His honor. There may be great evidence in a person's conduct that this kind of religion is his natural element — that he finds the delight and happiness of his life in it — and his manner of life may carry the sweet fragrance of Christian graces and heavenly dispositions wherever he goes. When it is thus with professors of Christianity, here is evidence to others of their sincerity that no other kind of manifestation can compare with.

There is undoubtedly a wide range in the degree of evidence professors exhibit of their sincerity through their life and practice, just as there is a range in the clarity and fullness of the accounts persons give of the manner and method of their experiences. But without question, the kind of manifestation of a Christian spirit in practice that has been described far surpasses the fairest and most impressive account of particular steps and experiences that was ever told. In general, demonstrating the sincerity of a Christian profession through practice is far better than any account of experiences.

But yet,

Third, it must be noted — consistent with what was observed earlier — that no outward demonstrations or external appearances whatsoever that are visible to the world are infallible evidence of grace. The manifestations described are the best that human beings can have, and they do oblige Christians to fully receive professors as saints, to love them and rejoice in them as children of God, and they are sufficient to give as great a level of assurance about such persons as is ever needed to guide conduct or for any practical purpose in this world. But nothing that appears in a neighbor can be sufficient to produce absolute certainty about the state of his soul. We cannot see his heart, and we cannot observe all of his outward behavior — much of it is private and hidden from the eyes of the world. And it is impossible to determine with certainty how far a person may go in many external appearances and imitations of grace from motives other than grace. Though undoubtedly, if others could see as much of what belongs to a person's practice as that person's own conscience can see of it, it might be an infallible evidence of their state — as will appear from what follows.

Having considered Christian practice as the best evidence of the sincerity of professors to others, I now proceed.

Second, I observe that Scripture also speaks of Christian practice as a distinguishing and reliable evidence of grace to a person's own conscience. This is very plain in 1 John 2:3: 'By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.' The testimony of our own consciences regarding our good deeds is spoken of as something that can give us assurance of our genuine godliness (1 John 3:18-19): 'Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed' — the original word means 'in work' — 'and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him.' The apostle Paul in Hebrews 6 speaks of the 'work and labor of love' of the Christian Hebrews as the very thing that both gave him confidence that they had something above the highest common spiritual experiences, and also as the evidence that would tend to give them the highest assurance of hope about themselves (verses 9 and following): 'But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end.' So the apostle directs the Galatians to examine their behavior and practice in order to have rejoicing within themselves about their blessed state (Galatians 6:4): 'But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.' The psalmist says in Psalm 119:6: 'Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all

Your commandments' — that is, then I will be bold and assured and steadfast in my hope. In Matthew 7:19-20 our Savior says: 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.' Though Christ gives this first as a rule for judging others, in the words that immediately follow He plainly shows He also intends it as a rule for judging ourselves: 'Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord"... and then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock... Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.' I will have occasion to mention other texts that show the same thing later.

But for greater clarity on this matter, I will first show how Christian practice — doing good works, or keeping Christ's commandments — is to be understood when Scripture presents it as a reliable sign to our own consciences that we are genuine Christians. And second, I will demonstrate that this is the chief of all evidences that people can have of their own sincere godliness.

First, I will show how Christian practice — or keeping Christ's commandments — is to be understood when Scripture presents it as a reliable evidence to our own consciences that we are sincere Christians.

Here I would observe that we cannot reasonably suppose that when Scripture in this context speaks of good works, good fruit, and keeping Christ's commandments, it refers merely to external

actions — the movement of the body — with no reference to anything else, and no regard for the aim or intention of the person, or any act of his understanding or will. Consider people's actions in that way alone, and they are no more good works or acts of obedience than the regular motions of a clock — nor are they even the actions of the person, or any human actions at all. The actions of the body, taken in isolation like this, are neither obedience nor disobedience — any more than the movements of a body in a convulsion. The obedience and fruit spoken of is the obedience and fruit of the person — and therefore consists not only in the actions of the body, but in the obedience of the soul, made up of the acts and practice of the soul. That said, I do not suppose that when Scripture in this context speaks of gracious works, fruit, and practice, these expressions include all inward piety and holiness of heart — both the principle and its exercise, both the spirit and the practice. If that were so, then these things being given as signs of a gracious principle in the heart would mean the same thing was being given as a sign of itself, with no distinction between root and fruit. What is meant is the gracious exercise and holy action of the soul — given as a sign of the holy principle and good spiritual state. And not every kind of inward exercise of grace is meant, but the practical exercise — that exercise and exertion of the soul's inner holiness which is present in an act of obedience: the exertion of the mind and the act of grace that issues and comes to completion in what might be called the directed acts of the will — in which something is directed and commanded by the soul to be done and carried out in practice.

For clearer understanding, I would observe that there are two kinds of exercises of grace. First, there are those sometimes called internal acts — exercises of grace that remain within the soul, beginning and ending there, without any immediate bearing on something to be done outwardly or carried out in practice. These are the exercises of grace that saints often have in contemplation: the exercise that is in the heart does not directly proceed to or terminate in anything beyond the thoughts of the mind — though they may tend toward practice more indirectly, as all exercises of grace do. Second, there is another kind of act of grace that is more strictly called practical or effective — because it immediately has reference to something to be done. These are the exertions of grace in the directing acts of the will that govern outward actions. For example, when a saint gives a cup of cold water to a fellow believer in and from the exercise of the grace of charity, or voluntarily endures persecution in the way of duty directly from the exercise of a supreme love to Christ. Here grace is exerted and produces its effect in outward action. These exercises of grace are practical and productive of good works — not only in the sense that they are productive in nature (for all true grace has this tendency), but in the sense that they are the actual producing acts. This is properly the exercise of grace in the act of the will, and this is properly the practice of the soul. The soul is the immediate agent of no other practice than this. The motions of the body follow from the laws of the union between soul and body — a union that God, not the soul, has established and maintains. The act of the soul and the exercise of grace that is exerted in the performance of a good work is the good work itself, insofar as the soul has part in it, or insofar as it is the soul's good work. The determinations of the will are indeed our

very actions, insofar as they are properly ours — as Dr. Doddridge observes. This practice of the soul includes the aim and intention of the soul as the agent. For not only would we not call the actions of a statue dispensing justice or distributing alms by clockwork obedience to Christ; neither would anyone call the voluntary actions of a person externally conforming to a command of Christ by the name of obedience to Christ if the person had never heard of Christ or His commands, or had no thought of them in what he did. If the acts of obedience and good fruit spoken of are understood not as mere bodily motions but as acts of the soul, then the whole exercise of the spirit and mind in the action must be taken into account — including the end aimed at and the soul's orientation toward God — otherwise they are not acts of self-denial or obedience to God or service done to Him, but something else entirely. Many of the martyrs have experienced such practical exercises of grace in a high degree. All true saints live a life made up of such acts of grace — a life of gracious works, of which these active exertions of grace are the life and soul. This is the obedience and fruit that God primarily looks at, for He looks at the soul more than the body — the soul being, by the constitution of human nature, the superior part. When God looks at the obedience and practice of a person, He looks at the practice of the soul, for the soul is the person in God's sight: 'For the Lord does not see as man sees, for He looks at the heart.'

This is how obedience, good works, and good fruit are to be understood when given in Scripture as a reliable evidence to our own consciences of a true principle of grace — as including the obedience and practice of the soul, preceding and governing the actions of the body. When practice is given in Scripture as the main evi-

dence of genuine Christianity to others, what is meant is that aspect of our practice that is visible to them — our outward actions. But when practice is given as a reliable evidence of genuine Christianity to our own consciences, what is meant is that aspect of our practice that is visible to our own consciences — which includes not only the movement of our bodies, but the exertion and exercise of the soul that directs and commands that movement, which is more directly and immediately under the view of our own consciences than the outward act of the body. This is the intent of Scripture — as the nature and reason of the thing makes clear, and as Scripture itself plainly shows. Thus it is evident that when Christ, at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, speaks of doing or practicing His teachings as the decisive mark of professors being true disciples — without which He likens them to a man who built his house on sand, and with which, to a man who built on rock — He has in view not only outward behavior but the inward exercise of the mind in that behavior. This is clear when we observe what those teachings are that He refers to when He speaks of doing or practicing them. They are such things as these: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are those who mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart; whoever is angry with his brother without cause; whoever looks at a woman with lust; love your enemies; do not be anxious for your life' — and others of the same kind, all of which imply inward exercises. And when Christ says in John 14:21, 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me,' He clearly has special reference to the command He repeated several times in the same discourse — which He calls by way of emphasis 'My command-

ment' — that they should love one another as He had loved them (see John 13:34-35; 15:10, 12-14). But this command is primarily a matter of the exercise of the mind and heart, though exerted in practice. So when the apostle John says in 1 John 2:3, 'By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments,' he plainly has primary reference to this same command, as is clear from what follows in verses 7-11 and in 2 John 5-6. And when Scripture tells us that at the last day people will be judged 'according to their works' and that 'all will receive according to the things done in the body,' this is not to be understood as referring only to outward acts. If it were, why is God so often described as searching the hearts and examining the inward nature in order to 'render to every one according to his works'? As Revelation 2:23 says: 'And all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.' Jeremiah 17:9-10: 'I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.' But if 'his ways and the results of his deeds' refers only to the actions of the body, what need is there to search the heart and mind in order to know them? Hezekiah in his illness pleaded his practice as evidence of his claim to God's favor — and that practice included not only his outward actions but what was in his heart (Isaiah 38:3): 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart.'

Though in this great evidence of sincerity that Scripture gives us the inward element is of greatest importance, the outward is included and intended — as connected with the practical exertion of grace in the will that directs and commands the actions of the

body. This effectively cuts off any claim to evidence of godliness by a person who lives wickedly in an outward sense — because the great evidence lies in that inward exercise and practice of the soul that consists in the act of the will commanding outward acts. And it is known that these commanding acts of the will and the actions of the bodily organs go together, since it is a fixed law of nature that they should be united as long as soul and body are united and the bodily organs are capable of the motions the soul commands. It would therefore be absurd for a person to claim that the directing act of his will was to go to public worship while his feet carry him to a tavern or brothel, or that the directing act of his will was to give a coin in his hand to a poor beggar while his hand at the same moment kept it back and held it fast.

Second, I proceed to show that Christian practice, understood in the sense explained, is the chief of all evidences of saving sincerity in religion to the conscience of the person who professes it — far to be preferred over the manner of first convictions, enlightenings, and comforts in conversion, or any purely internal discoveries or exercises of grace that begin and end in contemplation. The evidence of this appears in the following arguments.

Argument 1. Reason plainly shows that those things that put it to the test — what people will actually cling to and prefer in their behavior when left to follow their own choice and inclinations — are the proper test of what they truly prefer in their hearts. Sincerity in religion, as has already been observed, consists in setting God highest in the heart, in choosing Him above other things, in having a heart to give up everything for Christ. A person's actions are the proper test of what that person's heart prefers. For instance, when God and other things come to stand in competition —

when God is placed before a person on one side and his worldly interest or pleasure on the other (as frequently happens in the course of life) — his behavior in actually clinging to one and forsaking the other is the proper test of which he prefers. Sincerity consists in forsaking all for Christ in heart. But to forsake all for Christ in heart is the very same thing as to have a heart to forsake all for Christ. The proper test of whether a person has a heart to forsake all for Christ is being actually put to the test — having Christ and other things in competition, so that he must actually choose one and forsake the other. To forsake all for Christ in heart is the same as having a heart to forsake all for Christ when called to it. The highest proof to ourselves and others that we have a heart to forsake all for Christ when called to it is actually doing it when called to it, or as far as we are called to it. To follow Christ in heart is to have a heart to follow Him. To deny ourselves in heart for Christ is the same as having a heart to deny ourselves for Him in practice. The main and most proper proof that a person has a heart for anything — in a matter where he is free to follow his own inclinations and may do or not do as he pleases — is his actually doing it. When a person is free to speak or stay silent, the most proper evidence that he has a heart to speak is his speaking. When a person is free to walk or sit still, the proper proof that he has a heart to walk is his walking. Godliness does not consist in having a heart to intend to do God's will, but in having a heart to do it. The children of Israel in the wilderness had the former — and we read of it in Deuteronomy 5:27-29: 'Go near and hear all that the Lord our God says; then speak to us all that the Lord our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it. The Lord heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, "I have heard the

voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their sons forever!" The people showed that they had a heart to intend to keep God's commandments, and were very eager in those intentions. But God made clear that this was far from the thing He desired — the thing in which true godliness consists — which is a heart that actually keeps them.

It is therefore extremely absurd — even ridiculous — for anyone to claim to have a good heart while living a wicked life, or without bringing forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. For it is demonstrated in fact that such people do not love God above all things. It is foolish to argue against plain fact and experience. People who live in sinful ways yet flatter themselves that they will go to heaven, or expect to be received hereafter as holy persons without a holy life and practice, act as though they expect to make a fool of their Judge. This is what the apostle implies when he speaks of people exhibiting evidence of their title to eternal life through good works and a holy life (Galatians 6:7): 'Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.' This is as much as to say: do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping eternal life if you do not sow to the Spirit now. It is pointless to suppose that God will be made a fool of by you — that He will be satisfied and put off with mere shadows instead of substance, with empty claims instead of the good fruit He expects, when the opposite of what you claim appears plainly in your life before His face. The word 'mock' is sometimes used this way in Scripture. Delilah says to Samson, 'Behold,

you have deceived me and told me lies' (Judges 16:10, 13) — that is, you have played with me as though you would make a fool of me, as if I could be put off with any empty pretense instead of the truth. Similarly, when Lot told his sons-in-law that God would destroy the city, 'he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting' (Genesis 19:14) — that is, he seemed to be making a game of them, as though they were simple enough to take such warnings seriously. But the great Judge, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, will not be mocked or put off by any pretenses apart from a holy life. If in His name people have prophesied and worked miracles, if they have had faith enough to move mountains and cast out demons, if their religious affections have been ever so high, if they have shown every appearance of grace, and if their hiding place has been so dark and deep that no human scrutiny could find them out — yet if they are workers and practitioners of wickedness, they cannot hide their hypocrisy from their Judge. As Job 34:22 says: 'There is no darkness or deep shadow where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.' Would a wise king allow himself to be deceived and played for a fool by a subject who claimed to be loyal, who said he had genuine love for his king, that at such and such times he had experienced it and felt his affections strongly working toward him — and who came expecting to be accepted and rewarded as one of the king's best friends on that account — while living in open rebellion against him, following a rival claimant to the throne, and from time to time stirring up sedition? Or would a master allow himself to be shamed and taken advantage of by a servant who claimed great experiences of love and reverence to-

ward him in his heart, and a profound sense of his master's worth and kindness — while at the same time refusing to obey him, so that the master could get no service done by him?

Argument 2. Just as reason shows that the things which arise in the course of life and put it to the test — whether people will prefer God to other things in practice — are the proper trial of the sincerity of their hearts, so Scripture represents the same things as the proper trial of the sincerity of professors. Scripture calls these very things by the name of 'trials' or 'temptations' — which, as I noted earlier, are words of the same meaning. The things that test whether people will prefer God to other things in practice are the difficulties of religion — those things that arise and make the practice of duty difficult and contrary to principles other than love for God. In these, God and other things are both placed before people together on the path of duty. Scripture, in calling these difficulties of religion by the name of temptations or trials, explains that it means by this the testing or proving of their faith (James 1:2-3): 'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.' 1 Peter 1:6-7: 'In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable.' The apostle Paul speaks of the costly duty of giving our resources to the poor as 'the proof of the sincerity of your love' (2 Corinthians 8:8). The difficulties of religion are often represented in Scripture as the trial of professors in the same way that a furnace is the proper trial of gold and silver (Psalm 66:10-11): 'For You have tested us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid an oppressive burden upon

our loins.' Zechariah 13:9: 'And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested.' What has the color and appearance of gold is put into the furnace to discover whether it is what it seems to be — real gold or not. So the difficulties of religion are called trials because they try those who have the profession and appearance of saints, to discover whether they are what they appear to be — true saints. If we put genuine gold into the furnace, we find its great value and preciousness. So the truth and priceless value of a true Christian's character appears under these trials (1 Peter 1:7): 'So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' True and pure gold comes out of the furnace at full weight. So true saints, when tried, come forth as gold (Job 23:10). Christ distinguishes true grace from counterfeit grace by calling it 'gold refined in the fire' (Revelation 3:17-18). It is evident, then, that these things are called 'trials' in Scripture primarily because they try and prove the sincerity of professors. And from what has been observed, it is clear that they are the most proper trial or proof of sincerity — inasmuch as the very meaning of the word 'trial,' as ordinarily used in Scripture, is the difficulty arising in the way of a professor's duty as the test or proof of his sincerity. If 'trial of sincerity' is the fitting name for these difficulties of religion, then these difficulties are most properly and eminently the trial of sincerity. For surely they are eminently what the Holy Spirit calls them — God gives things their names from what is eminently their nature. And if these things are the proper and eminent trial, proof, and test of the sincerity of professors, then certainly the outcome of the trial — that is, people's

behavior and practice under such trials — is the proper and eminent evidence of their sincerity. For they are called trials or proofs only with regard to the result, and because the outcome is eminently the proof and evidence. And this is the most proper proof and evidence to the consciences of those who are the subjects of these trials. For when God is said by these things to 'try men, and prove them, to see what is in their hearts, and whether they will keep His commandments or not,' we are not to understand that this is for His own information — that He needs trials in order to learn about their sincerity. God needs no trials for His own knowledge. Rather, these trials are chiefly for the conviction of those being tried and for presenting evidence to their own consciences. Thus when God is said to test Israel by the difficulties they encountered in the wilderness and by the difficulties from their enemies in Canaan — to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep His commandments — it must be understood that this was to reveal them to themselves, that they might know what was in their own hearts. So when God tested Abraham with the difficult command to offer up his son, it was not for God's satisfaction about whether Abraham feared Him — God already knew. It was for Abraham's own greater satisfaction and comfort, and the clearer manifestation of God's favor to him. When Abraham proved faithful under this trial, God said to him: 'Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' This plainly implies that in this practical exercise of Abraham's grace under trial, there was clearer evidence of the truth of his grace than ever before — and the greatest evidence to Abraham's own conscience. God Himself gave it to Abraham for his comfort and joy, speaking of it to him as what could be the

greatest evidence to his conscience of being upright in the sight of his Judge. This proves my point: holy practice under trials is the highest evidence of the sincerity of professors to their own consciences. We also find that Christ, time and again, used this same method to convince the consciences of those who professed friendship to Him and to show them what they truly were. This was the method He used with the rich young man (Matthew 19:16 and following). The young man appeared to show great respect to Christ — he came kneeling, called Him 'Good Teacher,' and made a great profession of obedience to the commandments. But Christ tested him by telling him to go and sell everything he had, give to the poor, take up his cross, and follow Him, saying that then he would have treasure in heaven. He used the same method with another person we read of in Matthew 8:20. That man made a great profession of devotion to Christ, saying, 'Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.' Christ immediately put his friendship to the proof by telling him that foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. This is how Christ still tests professing disciples generally in His providence. So the seed sown in every kind of soil — rocky ground, thorny ground, and good ground — all appears alike when it first sprouts up. But the difference is made apparent through the scorching heat of the sun.

Since these are the very things God uses to test us, the surest way for us to judge ourselves rightly is to test ourselves by the same things. His trials are not for His information but for ours — and we should therefore receive our information from them. The surest way to know our gold is to look at it and examine it in God's furnace, where He tests it so that we may see what it is. If we want

to know whether a building stands firm, we must observe it when the wind blows. If we want to know whether what looks like wheat is real wheat or only chaff, we must observe it when it is winnowed. If we want to know whether a staff is strong or a rotten, broken reed, we must observe it when it is leaned on and bears weight. If we want to weigh ourselves accurately, we must use the scales that God uses to weigh us. These trials in the course of our practice are, as it were, the scales on which our hearts are weighed — the scales in which Christ and the world, or Christ and the things competing with Him for our hearts, are placed on opposite sides so that it can be seen which outweighs the other. When a person is brought to a fork in the road — one path leading to Christ, the other to the objects of his desires — and must choose which way to go; when he is placed, as it were, between Christ and the world, Christ on one side and the world on the other, so that going to one means leaving the other — this is exactly like placing Christ and the world in two opposite scales. His going to one and leaving the other is exactly the tipping of one scale down and the rising of the other. A person's practice under the trials of God's providence is therefore as much the proper test and evidence of the dominant inclination of his heart as the movement of the scale under different weights is the proper test of which weight is greater.

Argument 3. Another argument that holy practice, in the sense explained, is the highest kind of evidence of the truth of grace to the consciences of Christians is this: the commandment of Christ that the apostle especially has in mind when speaking of keeping His commandments is, as I noted, the great commandment that concerns love for our brothers and sisters — as the following verses of 1 John 2 make clear. Again, the love of God is said to be per-

fectured in the same sense in 1 John 4:12: 'If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.' Here the apostle clearly still has reference to loving one another in the same sense he explained in the preceding chapter, speaking of love for one another as a sign of the love of God (verse 17-18): 'But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed' — in work — 'and truth.' By thus 'loving in work,' the apostle says, 'the love of God is perfected in us.' Grace is said to be perfected or completed in holy practice because in practice it is brought to its proper effect — to that exercise which is the purpose of the principle. The tendency and design of grace is reached there, and its operation completed and crowned. As a tree is made perfect in its fruit. It is not perfected when the seed is planted in the ground. It is not perfected in the seed's first quickening or in its putting forth root and sprout. It is not perfected when it comes up out of the ground. It is not perfected in bringing forth leaves, nor even in putting forth blossoms. But when it has brought forth good, ripe fruit — then it is perfected. That is where it reaches its end. The purpose of the tree is fulfilled. Everything belonging to the tree is completed and brought to its proper effect in the fruit. So it is with grace in its practical exercises. Grace is said to be made perfect or completed in its work or fruit in the same way that sin is described in James 1:15: 'Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.' Here are three stages: first, sin in its principle or habit — the existence of sinful desire in the heart; second, its conceiving, consisting in the internal exercises of it in the mind; and third, the fruit that was

conceived actually coming to birth in wicked action and practice. And this the apostle calls the 'finishing' or 'perfecting' of sin — for the original word is the same as the one translated 'perfected' in the places mentioned above.

If it is true that grace is in this manner made perfect in its fruit — if these practical exercises of grace are the exercises in which grace is brought to its proper effect and purpose, the exercises in which everything belonging to its design, tendency, and operation is completed and crowned — then these exercises must be the highest evidence of grace above all other exercises. The proper nature and tendency of any principle must appear best and most fully in its most perfect exercises — in those exercises in which its nature is most completely expressed and its tendency most fully answered and crowned in its proper effect and end. If we want to see the true nature of anything and see it in its fullest distinction from other things, we must look at it in its completion. The apostle James says, 'By works faith is made perfect,' and uses this as an argument to prove that works are the chief evidence of faith by which the sincerity of those who profess faith is demonstrated (James 2). And the apostle John, after saying once and again that love is made perfect in keeping Christ's commandments, observes in 1 John 4:18: 'Perfect love casts out fear.' He means, at least in part, love made perfect in this sense — consistent with what he had said in the preceding chapter: 'By loving in deed, or in work, we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts' (verses 18-19).

Argument 4. Another thing that makes it evident that holy practice is the primary evidence we should use in judging both our own and others' sincerity is that this is the evidence most heavily emphasized in Scripture. A general familiarity with Scripture, to-

gether with a little attention and observation, is sufficient to show anyone that this is stressed as a mark of true godliness ten times more throughout Scripture — from Genesis to Revelation — than anything else. In the New Testament, where Christ and His apostles explicitly and deliberately lay down signs of true godliness, this is almost entirely what they insist on. It should be observed that Christ and His apostles not only frequently say things in their teaching on the great doctrines of religion that show what the nature of true godliness must be, or from which the nature and signs of it can be rightly inferred; they also often deliberately and on purpose give signs and marks for the testing of professors, directing people to examine themselves by the signs they give — introducing what they say with such expressions as: 'By this you will know that you know God; by this the children of God and children of the devil are made manifest; he who has this builds on a good foundation; he who does not has built on sand; by this we shall assure our hearts; he is the one who loves Christ,' and so on. But I cannot find any place where either Christ or His apostles give signs of godliness in this deliberate way — though there are many such places — where Christian practice is not almost the only thing insisted on. In many of these places, love for the brothers and sisters is spoken of as a sign of godliness. And as I noted before, no single virtuous affection or disposition is so often expressly mentioned as a sign of true grace as love for one another. But the Scriptures explain themselves to mean chiefly love as exercised and expressed in practice — in deeds of love. The apostle John, who more than any other insists on love for the brothers and sisters as a sign of godliness, most plainly explains himself in 1 John 3:14: 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the

brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death... Whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed' — that is, in deeds of love — 'and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him.' So when Scripture so strongly insists on our loving one another as a great sign of godliness, we are not to understand this primarily as the internal stirrings of warm feeling toward others, but as the soul's performing all the duties of the second table of the law — all of which the New Testament repeatedly tells us that true love for one another includes (Romans 13:8, 10; Galatians 5:14; Matthew 22:39-40). In reality, there is no place in the New Testament where the deliberate purpose is to give signs of godliness where holy practice and keeping Christ's commandments is not the mark chosen above all others to be insisted on. This is a conclusive argument that it is the chief of all evidences of godliness — unless we suppose that when Christ and His apostles deliberately set themselves to giving signs by which professing Christians in all ages could determine their state, they did not know how to choose signs as well as we could have chosen for them. But if we take the Word of Christ as our rule, then undoubtedly those marks which Christ and His apostles chiefly laid down and gave us to test ourselves by — those same marks we ought especially to receive and chiefly to use in testing ourselves. And surely those things that Christ and His apostles chiefly insisted on in the rules they gave, ministers ought to chiefly insist on in the rules they give. To insist much on things that Scripture insists little on, and to insist very little on things that Scripture insists much on, is a dangerous course — be-

cause it means departing from God's way and judging ourselves and guiding others in an unscriptural manner. God knew which way of leading and guiding souls was safest and best for them. He insisted greatly on certain things because He knew they needed to be insisted on. As a wise God, He left other things more alone because He knew it was not best for us to place the weight of the test there. As the Sabbath was made for humanity, so the Scriptures were made for humanity — fitted by infinite wisdom for our use and benefit. We should therefore make Scripture our guide in all things — in how we think about religion and about ourselves. To make great what Scripture makes small, and small what Scripture makes great, tends to give us a distorted idea of religion, and — at least indirectly and gradually — to lead us entirely away from the right standard and from a right view of ourselves, and to establish delusion and hypocrisy.

Argument 5. Christian practice is plainly spoken of in God's Word as the main evidence of the truth of grace — not only to others, but to a person's own conscience. It is not only mentioned and insisted on more than other signs; in many places where it is spoken of, it is presented as the chief of all evidences. This is clear from the emphatic manner in which it is expressed from time to time. If God were now to speak from heaven to resolve our doubts about signs of godliness, and were to give a particular sign by which all might know whether they were sincerely godly, using such emphatic expressions as these: 'The person who has this qualification — that is the true saint, that is the very one, by this you may know, this is the thing by which saints and sinners are revealed, such people are truly saints' — would we not regard it as beyond doubt that this was given as a special and distinctively im-

portant mark of true godliness? But this is exactly the case with the sign of grace I am describing. God has again and again spoken in His Word in exactly this way concerning Christian practice. John 14:21: 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.' Christ gives this not so much to guide the disciples in judging others, but to apply to themselves for their own comfort after His departure — as every word of the context makes clear. And by the way, it is worth noting not only the emphasis with which Christ speaks, but also how much He insists on and repeats the point throughout that context. Verse 15: 'If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.' Verse 23: 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.' Verse 24: 'He who does not love Me does not keep My words.' And in the next chapter He repeats it again and again. Verse 2: 'Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it.' Verse 8: 'My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.' Verse 14: 'You are My friends if you do what I command you.' We have this mark laid down with the same emphasis in John 8:31: 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.' And again in 1 John 2:3: 'By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.' Verse 5: 'But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.' And 1 John 3:18-19: 'Let us love in deed and truth. By this we will know that we are of the truth.' And how plainly is holy practice spoken of as the grand mark of distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil in verse 10 of that same chapter: 'By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious.' This is said in the context of holy and wicked practice, as all the sur-

rounding verses show. Verse 3: 'Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' Verses 6-10: 'No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil... No one who is born of God practices sin... The one who does not practice righteousness is not of God.' So 2 John 6: 'This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.' That is, as we must understand it, this is the proper evidence of love. So 1 John 5:3: 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.' So the apostle James, speaking of the proper evidences of true and pure religion, says in James 1:27: 'Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.' We find the same kind of emphatic language in the Old Testament as well. Job 28:28: 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' Jeremiah 22:15-16: 'Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; then it was well. Is not that what it means to know Me? declares the Lord.' Psalm 34:11 and following: 'Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord... Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.' Psalm 15:1-2: 'O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity.' Psalm 24:3-4: 'Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.' Psalm 119:1: 'How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who

walk in the law of the Lord.' Verse 6: 'Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Your commandments.' Proverbs 8:13: 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.'

Scripture never uses such emphatic language concerning any other sign of hypocrisy and insincerity of heart as it uses concerning an unholy practice. Galatians 6:7: 'Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.' 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: 'Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters,' and so on, 'will inherit the kingdom of God.' Ephesians 5:5-6: 'For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person,' and so on, 'has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words.' 1 John 3:7-8: 'Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil.' 1 John 2:4: 'The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' 1 John 1:6: 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.' James 1:27: 'If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.' James 3:14-15: 'But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.' Psalm 125:5.

Psalm 125:5: 'As for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity.' Isaiah 35:8: 'A highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it.'

Revelation 21:27: 'And nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it.' And in many places: 'Depart from Me; I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness.'

Argument 6. Another thing that makes it evident that holy practice is the chief of all signs of the sincerity of professors — not only to the world but to their own consciences — is that this is the grand evidence that will be used at the judgment seat of God, by which His judgment will be regulated and the state of every professor of religion irrevocably determined. At the future judgment there will be an open trial of professors, and evidences will be used in the judgment. For God's future judging of people, in order to their eternal reward or punishment, will not be His privately trying and finding out and passing judgment on the state of their hearts within His own mind. It will be a declarative judgment. Its purpose will not be God forming a judgment within Himself, but the public manifestation of His judgment and its righteousness — to people's own consciences and to the world. Therefore the day of judgment is called 'the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God' (Romans 2:5). The purpose of God's future trial and judgment of each person will be especially the clear manifestation of God's righteous judgment concerning him to his own conscience — as is evident from Matthew 18:31 to the end; 20:8-15; 22:11-13; 25:19-30 and verse 35 to the end; and Luke 19:15-23. Therefore, though God needs no evidence to make the truth clear to Himself, evidences will be used in His future judgment of people. And the evidences used in their trial will undoubtedly be those best fitted to serve the ends of the judgment — namely the manifestation of God's righteous judgment, not only to the world but to people's

own consciences. Scripture teaches abundantly that the grand evidence the Judge will use in the trial for these ends — by which the judgment of each person will be regulated and the irrevocable sentence passed — will be their works, their practice in this world. Revelation 20:12: 'And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened... and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.' Verse 13: 'And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.' 2 Corinthians 5:10: 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.' Practice is the only evidence that Christ represents the future judgment as governed by in the most detailed description of the day of judgment we have in the Bible — Matthew 25, at the close. See also Romans 2:6-13; Jeremiah 17:10; Job 34:11; Proverbs 24:12; Jeremiah 32:19; Revelation 22:12; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 2:23; Ezekiel 33:20; 1 Peter 1:17. At the day of judgment, the Judge will not — in order to convict people's consciences and make them manifest to the world — proceed to examine people about the method of their experiences or have every person tell the story of how they were converted. Their works will be brought forth as evidence of what they are — what they have done in darkness and in light (Ecclesiastes 12:14): 'For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.' In the trial that professors will undergo at the future judgment, God will use the same evidences to make them manifest to themselves and to the world that He uses to make them manifest

in the trials of His providence now — namely their practice in the cases where Christ and other things come into actual and immediate competition. At the day of judgment, God will weigh professors in a visible balance for the manifestation of His righteous judgment. And it will be the same balance in which He weighs people now — the balance already described.

From this we may undoubtedly conclude that people's works — understood in the sense that has been explained — are the highest evidence by which they ought to test themselves. Certainly what our supreme Judge will chiefly use to judge us when we stand before Him, we should chiefly use to judge ourselves. If God had not revealed the manner and evidence by which the Judge would proceed with us hereafter, how natural it would be to say: 'Oh, that I knew what token God will chiefly look for and insist upon in the last and decisive judgment — the token He expects all who will be accepted to be able to produce — according to which the sentence will be passed — so that I might know what token or evidence especially to seek now, so as not to fail then.' And since God has so plainly and thoroughly revealed what this token or evidence is, surely if we act wisely, we will regard it as of the greatest importance.

From everything that has been said, I believe it is abundantly clear that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the gracious sincerity of professors — to themselves and to others — and is the chief of all marks of grace, the sign of signs, the evidence of evidences, the thing that seals and crowns all other signs. I would rather have the testimony of my own conscience that I have such a word from my supreme Judge on my side as John 14:21 — 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me'

— than the judgment and fullest approval of all the wisest, soundest, and most experienced theologians of the past thousand years, based on the most careful and searching examination of my conversion experience. Not that there are no other good evidences of a state of grace. There may be other exercises of grace besides these practical exercises — experiences the saints have in contemplation — that may be very assuring to them. But this remains the chief and most proper evidence. There may be several good ways to tell that a tree is a fig tree, but the highest and most proper evidence is that it actually produces figs. It is possible for a person to have a good assurance of a state of grace at his first conversion, before he has had opportunity to build assurance through this great evidence. If a man hears that a great treasure is offered to him in a distant land on the condition that he value it enough to leave what he has at home and make the journey over the rocky mountains in the way — it is possible for him to be fully assured, the moment the offer is made, that he values the treasure as described. He may feel, beyond any doubt, a willingness to go. But this does not prevent his actually going from being the highest and most proper evidence of that willingness — both to others and to himself. But when considered as evidence to himself, the outward actions and movements of his body on the journey are not considered in isolation from the action of his mind and the consciousness within him of what is moving him and the end he is pursuing. Without that inward dimension, his bodily movement is no evidence to him that he values the treasure. In this way is Christian practice the most proper evidence of a saving valuation of 'the pearl of great price' and the 'treasure hidden in the field.'

Christian practice is the sign of signs in this sense: it is the great evidence that confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness. There is no single grace of the Spirit of God for which Christian practice is not the most proper evidence of its truth. Just as with the members of our bodies and all our tools, the proper proof of their soundness and usefulness is in their use — so it is with our graces, which are given to be used in practice just as much as our hands and feet, or the tools we work with, or the weapons we fight with. The proper test and proof of them is in their exercise in practice. Most of the things we use prove their usefulness by being put under some pressure, strain, agitation, or stress — a bow, a sword, an axe, a saw, a rope, a chain, a staff, a foot, a tooth, and so on. Those that are too weak to bear the strain or pressure we need to apply are useless. So it is with all the virtues of the mind. The proper test and proof of them is in being exercised under the temptations and trials that God brings us through in His providence, and in being put to service that presses hard against our natural inclinations.

Practice is the proper proof of true and saving knowledge of God, as the apostle's words already cited show: 'By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.' It is useless to 'profess that we know God' if 'in works we deny Him' (Titus 1:16). And if we 'know God but do not honor Him as God,' our knowledge will only condemn us, not save us (Romans 1:21). The defining mark of the knowledge that saves and brings happiness is that it is practical (John 13:17): 'If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.' Job 28:28: 'To depart from evil is understanding.'

Holy practice is the proper evidence of repentance. When the Jews professed repentance, coming and confessing their sins to John who preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, John directed them to the right way of obtaining and exhibiting proper evidence of the truth of their repentance by saying: 'Bear fruit in keeping with repentance' (Matthew 3:8). The apostle Paul followed the same pattern — see Acts 26:20. Pardon and mercy are repeatedly promised in Scripture to the one who has this evidence of true repentance — that he forsakes his sin (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; and many other places).

Holy practice is the proper evidence of saving faith. It is clear that the apostle James speaks of works as the thing that most clearly justifies faith — or, which is the same thing, that most clearly justifies those who profess faith and demonstrates the sincerity of their profession, not only to the world but to their own consciences. This is evident in the example he gives of Abraham (James 2:21-24). In verses 22 and 26 he speaks of the practical and active nature of faith as its very life and soul — in the same way that the active substance within a person's body is the life and soul of that body. If so, then practice is undoubtedly the proper evidence of the life and soul of true faith, by which it is distinguished from a dead faith. Practice is the most proper evidence of a practical nature, and operation is the most proper evidence of an operative nature.

Practice is the best evidence of a saving belief of the truth. What is spoken of as the proper evidence that truth is in a professing Christian is that 'he walks in the truth' (3 John 3): 'I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.'

Practice is the most proper evidence of a true coming to Christ and accepting and embracing Him. A true and saving coming to Christ is — as Christ often says — a coming that forsakes all for Him. As noted before, to forsake all for Christ in heart is the same as having a heart that will actually forsake all. But the proper evidence of having a heart that will actually forsake all is actually forsaking all, to the extent one is called to. If a prince courts a woman in a distant country, asking her to leave her own people and her father's household and come to him as his bride, the proper evidence of her heart's acceptance of the prince's proposal is her actually leaving her people and her father's household and coming to him. By this her acceptance of the prince's suit is made perfect — in the same sense that the apostle James says 'by works faith was made perfect.' Christ promises life on the condition of coming to Him — but it is the kind of coming He directed the young man to who asked what he must do to have eternal life. Christ told him to go, sell everything he had, and come and follow Him. If the man had consented in his heart to the proposal — and thereby come to Christ in his heart — the proper evidence would have been his actually doing it, and in that his coming to Christ would have been made perfect. When Christ called Matthew the tax collector — who was sitting at his tax booth in the midst of his worldly profits — the embracing of his heart to his Savior's call to come to Him was expressed and made perfect by actually getting up, leaving everything, and following Him (Luke 5:27-28). Christ and other things are set before us together, calling us in practice to cling to Him and forsake the other. In such a case, practically clinging to Christ is practically accepting Christ — just as a beggar's reaching out his

hand and taking an offered gift is his practical acceptance of the gift. Indeed, the very act of the soul that clings to Christ in practice is itself the most complete coming of the soul to Christ.

Practice is the most proper evidence of trusting in Christ for salvation. The proper meaning of the word 'trust,' both in ordinary speech and in Scripture, is the encouragement of a person's mind to take some venture in practice — to do something — on the credit of another's sufficiency and faithfulness. Therefore the proper evidence of trust is the venture one takes in what one does. A person cannot properly be said to be running any venture in dependence on something if he does nothing based on that dependence — if his practice is no different from what it would be without it. For a person to run a venture in dependence on another is to do something on the basis of that dependence which he would not do apart from it. Therefore it is in accepting the difficulties and apparent dangers of Christian practice — in dependence on Christ's sufficiency and faithfulness to bestow eternal life — that people are said to venture themselves upon Christ and to trust in Him for salvation. They depend on such promises as Matthew 10:39: 'He who has lost his life for My sake will find it.' And so they part with all and venture everything in dependence on Christ's sufficiency and faithfulness. This is what Scripture means by trusting in Christ in the exercise of saving faith in Him. Thus Abraham, the father of believers, trusted in Christ — by faith he left his own country in reliance on the covenant of grace God established with him (Hebrews 11:8-9). So also Moses: 'By faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin' (Hebrews 11:23 and following). So by faith others exposed them-

selves to being stoned, sawn in two, or killed by the sword; they endured mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented. And in this sense the apostle Paul trusted in Christ by faith and committed himself to Him — venturing himself and all his interests in dependence on the ability and faithfulness of his Redeemer, under great persecution and in the loss of all things (2 Timothy 1:12): 'For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.'

If a man receives word from the king of a distant land that he intends to make him his heir, and upon receiving this news he immediately leaves his native land, his friends, and everything he has in the world to go to that country in reliance on the promise — then he may properly be said to have ventured himself and all he has on it. But if he only sits still and hopes for the promised benefit, pleasing himself inwardly with thoughts of it, he cannot properly be said to have ventured himself on it. He runs no risk in the matter. He does nothing differently from what he would do if he had received no such message — nothing that would expose him to suffering if it all turned out to be false. So the person who, on the credit of what he hears about a future world and in reliance on the gospel's report of life and immortality, forsakes all — or at least does so as far as occasion requires, making everything else entirely give way to his eternal interest — that person, and only that person, may properly be said to have ventured himself on the report of the gospel. And this is the proper evidence of a true trust in Christ for salvation.

Practice is the proper evidence of gracious love — both to God and to other people. The texts that clearly teach this have been mentioned so often already that it is unnecessary to repeat them.

Practice is the proper evidence of humility. The expression and manifestation of humility of heart that God identifies as its great expression — the one He insists upon — is what we should regard as its proper expression and manifestation. And that is walking humbly (Micah 6:8): 'He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

Practice is also the proper evidence of the true fear of God (Proverbs 8:13).

Proverbs 8:13: 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.' Psalm 34:11 and following: 'Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit; depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.' Proverbs 3:7: 'Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.' Proverbs 16:6: 'By the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil.' Job 1:8: 'Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.' Job 2:3: 'Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him.' Psalm 36:1: 'Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.'

So practice — in returning to God in proportion to the blessings received — is the proper evidence of true thankfulness. Psalm 116:12: 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?' 2 Chronicles 32:25: 'But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received.' Paying our vows to God and ordering our conduct rightly are spoken of as the proper expression and evidence of true thankfulness in Psalm 50:14: 'Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High.' Verse 23: 'He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; and to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God.'

The proper evidence of gracious desires and longings — what distinguishes them from those that are false and empty — is that they are not idle wishes like Balaam's, but are effective in practice, genuinely stirring a person to earnestly and thoroughly seek what he longs for. Psalm 27:4: 'One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek.' Psalm 63:1-2: 'O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water, to see Your power and Your glory.' Verse 8: 'My soul clings to You.' Song of Solomon 1:4: 'Draw me after you and let us run together.'

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious hope. 1 John 3:3: 'And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' Patient perseverance in doing good through the difficulties and trials of the Christian life is often mentioned as the proper expression and fruit of a Christian hope. 1 Thessalonians 1:3: 'Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.' 1 Peter 1:13-14: 'Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you

at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children...' Psalm 119:166: 'I hope for Your salvation, O Lord, and do Your commandments.' Psalm 78:7: 'That they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.'

Cheerful practice of our duty and doing the will of God is the proper evidence of truly holy joy. Isaiah 64:5: 'You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness.' Psalm 119:111-112: 'I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, even to the end.' Verse 14: 'I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.' 1 Corinthians 13:6: 'Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.' 2 Corinthians 8:2: 'Their abundance of joy overflowed in the wealth of their generosity.'

Practice is also the proper evidence of Christian fortitude. A good soldier is not tested at the fireside but in the field of battle (1 Corinthians 9:25-26; 2 Timothy 2:3-5).

Just as the fruit of holy practice is the chief evidence of the truth of grace, so the degree to which experiences have influence on a person's practice is the most reliable evidence of the degree of what is spiritual and divine in those experiences. Whatever claims people make to great discoveries, great love and great joys — these are only to be credited as far as they have influence on practice. Allowances must be made for natural temperament. But that does not prevent grace being rightly measured by the degree of its effect in practice. The effect of grace is just as great, and the change just as remarkable, in a person with a very difficult natural temperament as in another. Although a person of such a temperament will

not behave as well with the same degree of grace as another, the difference from what was before conversion may be equally great — since a person of a naturally good temperament did not behave as badly before conversion.

This completes my effort to present the evidence that Christian practice is the chief of all signs of saving grace. Before concluding this discussion, I want to briefly address two objections that may be raised by some against what has been said on this point.

Objection 1. Some may say that this appears to be contrary to the view widely held among godly people — that professors should judge their state chiefly by their inward experience, and that spiritual experiences are the main evidence of true grace.

I answer: it is undoubtedly a true opinion, and rightly held by many godly people, that professors should chiefly judge their state by their experience. But it is a great mistake to think that what has been said is in any way contrary to that view. The chief sign of grace to a Christian's conscience being Christian practice — in the sense that has been explained, and according to what has been shown to be the true nature of Christian practice — is not at all inconsistent with Christian experience being the chief evidence of grace. Christian or holy practice is spiritual practice. It is not the movement of a body that does not know how, when, or why it moves. Spiritual practice in a person is the practice of spirit and body together — the practice of a spirit that gives life to, commands, and directs a body to which it is joined and over which the Creator has given it authority. Therefore the main thing in holy practice is the holy acts of the mind that direct and govern the movements of the body. The movements of the body are to be seen as belonging to Christian practice only secondarily, and only as

they depend on and flow from the acts of the soul. The exercises of grace that Christians find within themselves — that they are conscious of — are what they experience within themselves. That is what Christian experience consists in. And Christian experience consists as much in those effective exercises of grace in the will that are immediately involved in directing the behavior of the body as in other exercises. These inward exercises are not any the less a part of Christian experience because they have outward behavior immediately connected with them. A strong act of love toward God is not the less a part of spiritual experience because it is the very act that immediately produces and carries out some costly, self-denying outward action that greatly honors and glorifies God.

To speak of Christian experience and practice as if they were two things entirely and properly distinct from each other is to make a distinction without good reason. Indeed, not all Christian experience is properly called practice — but all Christian practice is properly experience. And the distinction made between them is not only unreasonable but unscriptural. Holy practice is one kind — one part — of Christian experience; and both reason and Scripture represent it as the chief, most important, and most distinguishing part. So it is represented in Jeremiah 22:15-16: 'Did not your father eat and drink and practice justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; then it was well. Is not that what it means to know Me? declares the Lord.' Our inward acquaintance with God certainly belongs to the category of experiential religion — but God here represents it as consisting chiefly in the experience there is in holy practice. So the exercises of the love of God and the fear of God are part of experiential religion — but Scripture represents these as

consisting chiefly in practice, in the texts already mentioned: 1 John 5:3: 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.' 2 John 6: 'This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.' Psalm 34:11 and following: 'Come, children, I will teach you the fear of the Lord... Depart from evil and do good.' These were the kinds of experiences Hezekiah drew comfort from chiefly on his sick bed when he said: 'Remember, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart.' And these are the kinds of experiences the psalmist chiefly insists upon in Psalm 119 and elsewhere. These are the kinds of experiences the apostle Paul chiefly emphasizes when he speaks of his own experience in his letters — Romans 1:9: 'God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son.' 2 Corinthians 1:12: 'For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world.' 2 Corinthians 4:13: 'But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak.' 2 Corinthians 5:7: 'For we walk by faith, not by sight.' Verse 14: 'For the love of Christ controls us.' 2 Corinthians 6:4-7: 'In everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the power of God.' Galatians 2:20: 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.' Philippians 3:7-8: 'But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More

than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.' Colossians 1:29: 'For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.' 1 Thessalonians 2:2: 'We had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.' Verses 8-10: 'Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day... You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.' And it was such experiences as these that the blessed apostle chiefly comforted himself with as he faced martyrdom (2 Timothy 4:6-7): 'For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.'

Not only does the most important and distinguishing part of Christian experience consist in spiritual practice, but such is the nature of those exercises of grace in which spiritual practice consists that nothing is more properly called by the name of experimental religion. The experience that is found in these exercises of grace — exercises that prove effective at the very point of trial, where God tests which we will actually cling to, whether Christ or our sinful desires — are, as has been shown, the proper experiment that tests the truth and power of our godliness, wherein its victorious power and effectiveness in reaching its proper end is found by experience. This is properly Christian experience — the place

where saints have the opportunity to discover, by actual experience and trial, whether they have a heart to do God's will and to forsake other things for Christ. Just as experimental philosophy is that which brings ideas and theories to the test of fact, so what is properly called experimental religion is that which brings religious affections and intentions to the same kind of test.

There is a kind of external religious practice that contains no inward experience — God places no value on it and considers it worthless. And there is what people call experience that is without practice — neither accompanied nor followed by Christian behavior — and this is worse than nothing. Many people seem to have very mistaken ideas about Christian experience, spiritual light, and spiritual discovery. Whenever a person finds within himself a heart to treat God as God at the moment of trial, and finds his disposition effective in the experiment — that is the most proper and most distinguishing experience. And to have at such a time a sense of divine things — a perception of the truth, importance, and excellence of the things of religion that actually sways, prevails, and governs the heart and hands — that is the most excellent spiritual light, and those are the most distinguishing discoveries. Religion consists greatly in holy affection — but those exercises of affection that are most distinguishing of true religion are these practical exercises. Friendship between earthly friends consists greatly in affection — but those strong exercises of affection that actually carry friends through fire and water for each other are the highest evidence of true friendship.

There is nothing in what has been said that is contrary to what is affirmed by sound theologians when they say there are no reliable evidences of grace except acts of grace. For that does not pre-

vent these effective, productive acts — those exercises of grace that prove effectual in practice — from being the highest evidences above all other kinds of acts of grace. Nor does it prevent the evidence from growing stronger when there are many of these acts and exercises following one another in a course under various kinds of trials — as one act confirms another. A person who catches one glimpse of a neighbor may have good evidence that the neighbor is present. But by seeing him day after day and conversing with him in various circumstances over a period of time, the evidence becomes well established. When the disciples first saw Christ after His resurrection, they had good evidence He was alive. But by conversing with Him for forty days, and His 'presenting Himself alive to them by many convincing proofs,' they had yet stronger evidence.

The witness or seal of the Spirit that we read of undoubtedly consists in the effect of the Spirit of God in the heart — in the planting and exercise of grace there — and so consists in experience. And it is also beyond doubt that this seal of the Spirit is the highest kind of evidence of the saint's adoption that they ever obtain. But in these exercises of grace in practice that have been described, God gives witness and sets His seal in the most clear, conspicuous, and evident manner. It has been abundantly confirmed by the experience of the Christian church that Christ commonly gives, by His Spirit, the greatest and most joyful evidences of sonship to His saints in those effective exercises of grace under trial — as is evident in the full assurance and unspeakable joy of many of the martyrs. This is consistent with 1 Peter 4:14: 'If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.' And Romans 5:2-3: 'We exult in hope of

the glory of God, and we also exult in our tribulations.' And with what the apostle Paul often declares of what he experienced in his trials. When the apostle Peter, in my text, speaks of 'joy inexpressible and full of glory' that the Christians he was writing to experienced, he has in view what they found under persecution — as the context makes clear. Christ's thus manifesting Himself as the Friend and Savior of His saints who cling to Him under trials seems to have been prefigured in His coming and revealing Himself to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace. When the apostle speaks of the witness of the Spirit in Romans 8:15-17, he has more immediate reference to what the Christians experienced in their exercises of love to God in suffering persecution — as is plain from the context. In the verses before, he is encouraging the Roman Christians under their sufferings, that though their bodies are dead because of sin, they will be raised to life again. This is made especially plain by the very next verse (verse 18): 'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.' The apostle clearly has their persecutions in view throughout all that follows to the end of the chapter. So when the apostle speaks of 'the earnest of the Spirit' that God had given him in 2 Corinthians 5:5, the context plainly shows he has reference to what was given him in his great trials and sufferings. And in the promise of 'the white stone and a new name, to him who overcomes' in Revelation 2:17, it is clear that Christ has special reference to a benefit that Christians would obtain by overcoming in the trial of that day of persecution — as verse 13 and many other passages in the letters to the seven churches of Asia make clear.

Objection 2. Some may also object against what has been said about Christian practice being the chief evidence of the truth of grace, claiming that this is a legal doctrine — that making practice so important in religion magnifies works and tends to lead people to rely too much on their own doings, to the diminishment of the glory of free grace, and does not seem to fit well with the great gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone.

But this objection has no force. In what way is it inconsistent with the freeness of God's grace that holy practice should be a sign of that grace? It is our works being the price of God's favor — not their being the sign of it — that is inconsistent with the freeness of that favor. Surely a beggar's looking at the money in his hand as a sign of the kindness of the one who gave it to him is in no way inconsistent with the freeness of that kindness. It is his having money as the price of a benefit that is inconsistent with the giver's free kindness. The concept of the freeness of God's grace to sinners — as it is revealed and taught in the gospel — is not that no holy and admirable qualities or actions in us will be a fruit and therefore a sign of that grace. It is that it is not the worthiness or loveliness of any quality or action of ours that commends us to that grace. It is that kindness is shown to the unworthy and unlovely — that great excellence belongs to the benefit given, while no excellence in the one receiving it is its price — that goodness flows out from the fullness of God's nature, the fullness of the fountain of good, without any attractiveness in the object drawing it. And this is the concept of justification without works, as the doctrine is taught in Scripture: that it is not the worthiness or loveliness of our works, or anything in us, which is in any way accepted by God as a balancing of the guilt of sin or as a recommendation of sinners

to His acceptance as heirs of life. We are justified only by the righteousness of Christ, and not by our own righteousness. And when works are contrasted with faith in this matter — when it is said that we are justified by faith and not by works — the meaning is that it is not the worthiness or loveliness of our works, or anything in us, that brings us into a relationship with Christ and His benefits. We have this relationship only through faith — by the soul's receiving Christ, adhering to Him, and embracing Him. But the fact that nothing in us commends us or brings us into a relationship with Christ is no argument that nothing in us is a sign of that relationship.

If the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith alone were inconsistent with the importance of holy practice as a sign of grace, they would be equally inconsistent with the importance of anything whatsoever in us as a sign of grace — any holiness, any grace in us, any of our experiences or religion. For it is just as contrary to the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith alone that any of these should be the righteousness by which we are justified as that holy practice should be. What applies to holy works applies equally to holy qualities: it is inconsistent with the freeness of gospel grace that a title to salvation should be given for the loveliness of any of our holy qualities, just as much as for the holiness of our works. It is inconsistent with the gospel doctrine of free grace that an interest in Christ and His benefits should be given for the loveliness of a person's true holiness — for the attractiveness of his renewed, sanctified, heavenly heart, his love for God, his likeness to God, his experience of joy in the Holy Spirit, his self-emptying, his spirit to exalt Christ above all and give all glory to Him, and his heart devoted to Him. I say, it is inconsistent with the

gospel doctrine of free grace that a title to Christ's benefits should be given out of regard for the loveliness of any of these, or that any of these should be our righteousness in the matter of justification. And yet this does not prevent these things from being important as evidences of an interest in Christ. Exactly so it is with holy actions and works. To make light of works because we are not justified by works is effectively the same as making light of all religion, all grace and holiness — yes, true evangelical holiness — and all gracious experience. For all of this is included when Scripture says we are not justified by works. By 'works' in this case is meant all our own righteousness, religion, or holiness — everything that is in us, all the good we do, all the good we are conscious of, all external acts, all internal acts and exercises of grace, all experiences, and all those holy and heavenly things in which the life, power, and very essence of religion consist — all the great things that Christ and His apostles chiefly emphasized in their preaching and labored to promote as of the greatest importance in the hearts and lives of people — and all good dispositions, exercises, and qualities of every kind whatsoever, even faith itself considered as part of our holiness. For we are justified by none of these things; and if we were, we would in the scriptural sense be justified by works. Therefore, if it is legal and contrary to the evangelical doctrine of justification without works to insist on any of these as of great importance as evidence of an interest in Christ, then it is no more legal to insist on the importance of holy practice. It would be legal to suppose that holy practice justifies by bringing us a title to Christ's benefits as its price, or by commending us to them by its preciousness or excellence. But it is not legal to suppose that holy practice justifies the sincerity of a believer as its proper evidence. The apostle James

did not think it was legal to say that 'Abraham our father was justified by works' in this sense. The Spirit that inspired Scripture did not think the great importance and absolute necessity of holy practice in this regard to be inconsistent with the freeness of grace — for Scripture commonly teaches both together, as in Revelation 21:6-7. God says, 'I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.' And then immediately adds: 'He who overcomes will inherit these things' — as though behaving well in the Christian race and warfare were the condition of the promise. So in the next chapter, at Revelation 22:14-15, Christ says: 'Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.' And then He declares how those who practice wickedness will be excluded. Yet in the very next two verses He issues with great solemnity an invitation to all to come and take the water of life freely: 'I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things... The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.' So Revelation 3:20-21: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.' And then immediately: 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne.' And in that great invitation of Christ in Matthew 11 — 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest' — Christ immediately adds: 'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.' As though taking up Christ's service and imitating His example were necessary to the

promised rest. So in that great invitation to sinners to accept free grace in Isaiah 55 — 'Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost' — even there, in the continuation of the same invitation, the sinner's forsaking his wicked practice is spoken of as necessary to obtaining mercy (verse 7): 'Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.' So the riches of divine grace in the justification of sinners are set forth alongside the necessity of holy practice in Isaiah 1:15 and following: 'Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.' And in that most solemn invitation of Wisdom in Proverbs 9 — after it is described what great provision has been made, the house built, the animals slaughtered, the wine poured, the table spread, and messengers sent out to invite the guests — the free invitation comes in verses 4-6: 'Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! To him who lacks sense she says, Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed.' But then in the very next breath it continues: 'Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding.' As though forsaking sin and walking in holiness were necessary to life. So the freeness of grace and the necessity of holy practice — joined together in Scripture time and again — are not inconsistent with one another. Nor does it in any way diminish the honor and

importance of faith that the exercises and effects of faith in practice should be regarded as the chief signs of it — any more than regarding action and movement as the chief signs of life diminishes the importance of life.

In everything that has been said about the importance of holy practice as the main sign of sincerity, there is nothing legal, nothing that diminishes the freedom and sovereignty of gospel grace, nothing that clashes in the slightest with the gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone without the works of the law, nothing that tends to lessen the glory of the Mediator or our dependence on His righteousness, nothing that infringes on the special role of faith in the matter of our salvation, and nothing that in any way takes from the glory of God and His mercy, exalts human achievement, or diminishes our dependence and obligation. So if anyone objects to the importance of holy practice as described, it can only be from a senseless aversion to the letters and sound of the word 'works.' There is no reason in the world for such an aversion that could not equally be applied to the words holiness, godliness, grace, religion, experience, and even faith itself. For to make any of these the ground of our righteousness before God is just as legal, and just as inconsistent with the way of the new covenant, as making holy practice the ground of it.

It is greatly harmful to religion for people to make light of and minimize those things that Scripture most insists on as being of greatest importance in the evidence of our interest in Christ — under the notion that placing weight on them is legal and an old-covenant approach — and so to neglect the exercises and effective operations of grace in practice, insisting almost entirely on discoveries and the manner and method of the internal exercises of con-

science and grace in contemplation, relying on an ability to make fine distinctions in these matters and a faculty of accurate discernment based on philosophy or experience. It is useless to seek for better or further signs than those which Scripture has most plainly stated and most frequently insisted on as signs of godliness. Those who claim to offer greater accuracy in giving signs — or who, by extraordinary experience or insight into the nature of things, claim to give more distinguishing marks that more thoroughly expose the hypocrite — are only skilled at darkening their own minds and the minds of others. Their refinements and subtle discernments are, in God's sight, refined foolishness and clever self-deception. To this apply the words of Agur in Proverbs 30:5-6: 'Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.' Our wisdom and discernment with respect to the hearts of people is not much to be trusted. We can see only a little way into the nature of the soul and the depths of the human heart. There are so many ways in which people's affections may be stirred without any supernatural influence — the natural sources of emotion are so various and hidden, so many things often combine to influence the affections, the imagination (and this in ways beyond count and comprehension), natural temperament, upbringing, the common influences of the Spirit of God, a surprising collection of affecting circumstances, an unusual coincidence of things in the course of a person's thoughts, along with the subtle management of invisible, malicious spirits — that no philosophy or human experience will ever be sufficient to guide us safely through this labyrinth and maze without closely following the thread that God has given us in His Word. God knows His own reasons for insisting

on certain things and plainly presenting them as the things by which we should test ourselves rather than others. Perhaps it is because He knows that these things are attended with less confusion and that we are less likely to be deceived through them than through others. He knows our nature best; He knows the nature and manner of His own operations; He knows best the way of our safety. He knows what allowances to make for different states of His church and different temperaments of particular people, for variations in the manner of His operations, how far nature may resemble grace, how far nature may be mixed with grace, what affections may arise from imagination, and how far imagination may be mixed with spiritual illumination. It is therefore our wisdom not to take His work out of His hands, but to follow Him and rest our self-judgment where He has directed it. If we do otherwise, no wonder we become bewildered, confused, and fatally deceived. But if we were to make a habit of looking chiefly at the things Christ, His apostles, and His prophets chiefly insisted on — and so, in judging ourselves and others, to pay primary attention to the practical exercises and effects of grace without neglecting other things — the results would be happily manifold. More than anything else, it would tend to convict deluded hypocrites and prevent the self-deception of those whose hearts have never been truly brought into compliance with the straight and narrow way that leads to life. It would tend to deliver us from countless difficulties arising from the various, inconsistent schemes and sequences of experience. It would greatly prevent professors from neglecting a strict life and would promote earnestness and engagement in their Christian walk. It would become customary for people to show their Christianity more by a godly and distinguished manner of life than

by excessive declarations of their spiritual experiences. And we would come to appear lively in religion more by being lively in the service of God and our generation than by the liveliness and forwardness of our tongues, and making a habit of proclaiming from the housetops the holy and eminent acts and exercises of our own hearts. And Christians who are close friends would talk together of their experiences and comforts in a way more fitting to Christian humility and modesty, and more to each other's benefit — their tongues going behind rather than ahead of their hands and feet, after the wise example of the blessed apostle (2 Corinthians 12:6). Many occasions of spiritual pride would be cut off. A great door would be shut against the devil. Many of the main stumbling blocks against experiential and powerful religion would be removed. And religion would be declared and made visible in such a way that, instead of hardening observers and greatly promoting unbelief and atheism, it would above all things tend to convince people that there is a reality in religion — greatly awakening them and winning them by convincing their consciences of the importance and excellence of religion. Thus the light of professors would so shine before people that others, seeing their good works, would glorify their Father who is in heaven.

PART 3.

I now turn to the second part of the inquiry into religious affections — distinguishing the characteristics of truly gracious and holy affections from those that are not.

Before presenting these distinguishing characteristics, I want to make several preliminary observations.

First, I am not claiming to provide signs that will allow one person to make a certain judgment about another person's spiritual state. God has reserved the final, decisive judgment of hearts for Himself. The signs I will offer may serve as reasonable grounds for charitable judgment, but not for the kind of certain, definitive verdict that belongs to God alone.

Second, these signs will not enable a true saint who is in a very low spiritual condition, or in a bad spiritual frame, to gain a clear knowledge of his own good standing before God. When grace is very weak or when sin has brought the soul into a dark and troubled state, the marks of grace are difficult to read — not because the marks are defective, but because the person's condition makes them hard to see.

This difficulty does not mean the signs themselves are faulty. The problem lies with the person, not the signs — and it takes two forms. The first is a defect in the object — that is, in grace itself. When grace is very small and weak, it is hard to see, just as it is hard to tell from examining an embryo whether it will develop into a dove or a raven. The features that will later distinguish the two creatures clearly are not yet visible in their earliest, most undeveloped form.

The second defect is in the eye — that is, in the person's spiritual sight. Sin clouds and dims the eyes of the soul. A person in a bad spiritual frame sees everything through a distorting lens. Just as a serious illness can impair a person's senses so that they cannot accurately perceive what is before them, so spiritual sickness distorts the soul's perception of its own condition. In such a state, even genuine signs of grace may not be seen clearly enough to bring assurance.

When a person is in a bad spiritual frame, examining signs will not bring assurance. Before the signs can do their work, the problem that caused the bad frame must be addressed. Achan had to be removed from the camp before Israel could move forward. The way to regain assurance in such a case is not primarily by examining signs but by acting — by vigorously renewing one's engagement with godliness. This is what the apostle Paul did: rather than looking back and examining past experiences, he pressed forward (Philippians 3:13-14). And this is the approach the apostle Peter recommends in 2 Peter 1:5-11 — rather than offering a method of self-examination, he calls believers to add virtue to virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. He tells them that if these things are in them and are increasing, they will never stumble, and they will have rich entry into the eternal kingdom. The way to make one's calling and election sure is through the diligent exercise of these graces in practice.

Nevertheless, the signs I will describe are still genuinely useful to true saints in various ways. For those who are not in a deeply troubled frame, they can provide real grounds for assurance. For those who are troubled by particular scruples or doubts about specific aspects of their experience, the signs can help resolve those specific questions. And for all saints, a clear understanding of what true grace looks like — as distinguished from what is false — is valuable for navigating the complex landscape of religious experience.

Third, I have little expectation that settled hypocrites — those who have long been self-deceived and have built their confidence on false foundations — will be brought by these signs to see their true condition. Their state is deeply deplorable. The very self-de-

ception that holds them is part of what makes it so hard to dislodge. However, these signs may still serve to prevent others from falling into such a state of settled self-deception. They may also help true saints detect and identify false affections that are mixed in among their genuine graces — for even true saints are not immune to having some affections that arise from nature or the flesh rather than from the Spirit.

Having made these preliminary observations, I now proceed to describe the distinguishing characteristics of truly gracious affections.

The first distinguishing sign is this: truly gracious and holy affections arise from spiritual, supernatural, and divine influences working in the soul. They have their source in something above nature — they are not produced by any natural process or capacity, but by the Spirit of God working in the heart in a way that is above and distinct from all natural operations.

To understand this sign, we need to clarify what is meant by calling these influences spiritual, supernatural, and divine.

In the New Testament, true saints are called spiritual people. This term is used in direct contrast to those who are natural — that is, those who have not been renewed by the Spirit of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, the natural person is described as one who does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to understand them. The spiritual person, by contrast, is able to judge all things. In Jude 19, those who cause divisions are described as worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. And throughout Romans 7 and 8, the apostle Paul

sets the life lived according to the flesh in sharp contrast to the life lived according to the Spirit — the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

Scripture also uses the word 'spiritual' to describe certain qualities, principles, and ways of thinking. We read of a spiritual mind and spiritual wisdom in Colossians 1:9, and of things that are called spiritual.

The word 'spiritual' in these and similar New Testament passages does not simply mean things that relate to the soul or spirit of a person, as opposed to the body. Things are not called spiritual simply because they reside in the soul rather than the body. In fact, some qualities that Scripture calls carnal or fleshly also reside in the soul — for instance, pride, self-righteousness, and relying on one's own wisdom, which the apostle calls fleshly in Colossians 2:18. Nor are things called spiritual simply because they deal with immaterial rather than physical realities. The wise men and rulers of this world also reasoned about spirits and immaterial beings — and yet the apostle treats them as natural men who are completely ignorant of spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2). Rather, in the New Testament, persons and things are called spiritual in relation to the Holy Spirit — the third person of the Trinity. 'Spirit,' used to refer to the Holy Spirit, is the noun from which the adjective 'spiritual' is derived in Scripture. Christians are called spiritual persons because they are born of the Spirit and because the Holy Spirit dwells in them and works in them. Things are called spiritual insofar as they relate to the Spirit of God, as in 1 Corinthians 2:13-14: 'We speak these things not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But the natural man does not accept the things of

the Spirit of God.' Here the apostle himself makes clear that by 'spiritual things' he means 'the things of the Spirit of God' and 'what the Holy Spirit teaches.' This is even more apparent when you read the entire passage in context. Again, Romans 8:6 says: 'To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' The apostle explains what he means by spiritually minded in verse 9: 'But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.' To be spiritually minded, then, is to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart and working His holy influences there. The same meaning is clear throughout the whole context. There is far more evidence of this throughout the New Testament than can be fully laid out here.

It must be noted, however, that not every person who is influenced in any way by the Spirit of God is ordinarily called spiritual in the New Testament. Those who have only the common, non-saving influences of the Spirit are not called spiritual in the passages cited above. Only those who have the special, gracious, and saving influences of the Spirit are called spiritual — as is evident from the fact, already demonstrated, that 'spiritual' men in Scripture means godly men, in contrast to natural, carnal, and unsanctified men. It is plain that the apostle's phrase 'spiritually minded' in Romans 8:6 means graciously minded. Even the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit — which unregenerate people could sometimes possess — are occasionally called spiritual because they come from the Spirit. But a person who had such gifts was not, in the normal language of the New Testament, called a spiritual person. It was not having the gifts of the Spirit but having the virtues of the Spirit that made someone spiritual. This is clear from

Galatians 6:1: 'Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.' Gentleness is one of the fruits of the Spirit that the apostle had just listed in the preceding verses. Those qualities that are truly gracious and holy — and that belong distinctively to the saints — are the ones the New Testament calls spiritual.

So when we read of spiritual wisdom and understanding — as in Colossians 1:9: 'We pray that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding' — what is meant is that wisdom which is gracious and which flows from the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God. Spiritual wisdom is the opposite of what Scripture calls natural wisdom, just as the spiritual man is the opposite of the natural man. Therefore spiritual wisdom is the same as the wisdom from above that James describes in James 3:17: 'The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle....' James sets this in contrast to natural wisdom in verse 15: 'This wisdom is not from above, but is earthly, sensual' — the original word translated 'sensual' is the same word translated 'natural' in 1 Corinthians 2:14.

So while unregenerate people may be subject to many influences of the Spirit of God — as is clear from Numbers 24:2; 1 Samuel 10:10; 11:6; 16:14; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Hebrews 6:4-6, and many other passages — they are not, in the scriptural sense, spiritual persons. None of the effects, common gifts, qualities, or affections that arise from the Spirit's influence on them are called spiritual things. The difference between these common influences and true spiritual experience lies in two things.

First, the Spirit of God is given to true saints to dwell in them as His proper and lasting home — to influence their hearts as a principle of new nature, as a divine and supernatural source of life and action. Scripture presents the Holy Spirit not merely as moving or occasionally influencing the saints, but as dwelling in them as in His temple, His proper residence and permanent dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; John 14:16-17). He is so united to the faculties of the soul that He becomes in them a principle and source of new nature and life.

This is why Scripture says that saints live by Christ living in them (Galatians 2:20). Christ by His Spirit is not merely present in them — He lives in them — so that they live by His life. His Spirit is united to them as the principle of life within them. They do not merely drink living water; that living water becomes a well or fountain within the soul, springing up into spiritual and everlasting life (John 4:14). John himself explains in chapter 7:38-39 that this living water refers to the Spirit of God. The light of the Sun of Righteousness does not merely shine on them from outside — it is communicated to them so that they also shine, becoming small reflections of the Sun that shines upon them. The life-giving sap of the true Vine is not merely channeled into them as sap might be collected in a vessel — it flows into them as sap flows into a living branch of the tree, where it becomes the principle of that branch's life. Because the Spirit of God is communicated to and united with the saints in this way, they are rightly called spiritual.

Unregenerate people, on the other hand, may be influenced by the Spirit of God in various ways — but because the Spirit is not communicated to them as an indwelling principle, they receive no defining character from it, for without that union it is not truly

their own. Light may shine on a dark or black object, and though that object is in the presence of the light, the light does not become a principle of illumination within it so as to make the object shine. Therefore that object is not called a luminous body. In the same way, the Spirit of God acting upon a soul without communicating Himself as an active principle within it cannot make that soul spiritual. An object that remains dark is said not to have light, even though light shines on it. Similarly, unregenerate people are said to not have the Spirit — as Jude 19 says: 'Worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.'

The second reason — and the more fundamental one — why the saints and their virtues are called spiritual is this: the Spirit of God, dwelling as a vital principle in their souls, there produces effects in which He expresses and communicates Himself in His own proper nature. Holiness is the nature of the Spirit of God — which is why He is called in Scripture the Holy Spirit. Holiness — the beauty and sweetness of the divine nature — is as truly the proper nature of the Holy Spirit as heat is the nature of fire. It is as if one were to say that holiness is to the Holy Spirit what fragrance is to a perfume. The Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of the saints in such a way that He, as the seed and spring of their life, expresses and communicates Himself there in this sweet and divine nature — making the soul a participant in God's beauty and Christ's joy. In this way the saint has true fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, by sharing in the communion of the Holy Spirit. The grace in the hearts of the saints is of the same nature as the divine holiness — though infinitely less in degree — just as the brightness reflected in a diamond is of the same nature as the sunlight shining on it, though utterly incomparable in intensity. This

is why Christ says in John 3:6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit' — meaning that the grace produced in the hearts of the saints is something of the same nature as the Spirit who produced it, and is therefore rightly called a spiritual nature. This parallels the way that what is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of corrupt nature is corrupt nature.

The Spirit of God never influences the minds of unregenerate people in this way. Though He may influence them in many ways, He never communicates Himself to them in His own proper nature. He never acts in a way that contradicts His nature — whether working in the hearts of saints or sinners. But there is a difference between acting in agreement with one's nature and communicating one's nature in the effects of one's action. The Spirit of God can act in ways that are consistent with His nature without communicating Himself in His nature through the effect of that action. For example, the Spirit moved over the face of the waters at creation — and there was nothing in that action contrary to His nature. Yet He did not communicate Himself in that action; there was nothing of the proper nature of the Holy Spirit in the movement of the waters. In the same way, He can act upon the minds of people in many ways without communicating Himself any more than when He acts on inanimate things.

So the difference between the Spirit's work in saints and His influences on unregenerate people is not merely a difference in the relationship between the Spirit and the person He operates on — though that difference is real, since He dwells in the saints as an abiding principle while He does not dwell in sinners. The operation itself is different, and the effect produced is vastly different. This is why not only the persons are called spiritual — as those in

whom the Spirit of God dwells — but also the qualities, affections, and experiences produced in them by the Spirit are called spiritual. In their very nature and kind, these things differ completely from anything an unregenerate person experiences or can experience while remaining in a natural state. They also differ from anything that human beings or evil spirits can produce. This work is spiritual in the highest sense — and therefore, above all other works, it is uniquely and distinctly the work of the Spirit of God. No work is higher or more excellent, for in no other work does God communicate Himself so fully, or does the creature participate in God so profoundly. Scripture expresses this by saying that the saints are 'made partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4); that God dwells in them and they in God (1 John 4:12, 15-16; 3:21); that Christ is in them (John 17:21; Romans 8:10); that they are temples of the living God (2 Corinthians 6:16); that they live by Christ's life (Galatians 2:20); that they are made partakers of God's holiness (Hebrews 12:10); that Christ's love dwells in them (John 17:26); that His joy is fulfilled in them (John 17:13); that they see light in God's light and drink from the river of God's pleasures (Psalm 36:8-9); and that they have fellowship — communion and participation — with God (1 John 1:3). This does not mean that the saints share in the essence of God Himself — that they are 'Godded with God' or 'Christed with Christ,' in the abominable and blasphemous language of certain heretics. Rather, to use the scriptural phrase, they are made partakers of God's fullness (Ephesians 3:17-19; John 1:16) — that is, of God's spiritual beauty and happiness, to the measure and capacity of a creature, which is clearly what 'fullness' means in scriptural usage. Grace in the hearts of the saints is therefore the most glorious of all God's works — the work in which

He most fully communicates the goodness of His own nature. It is without doubt His most distinctly divine work, surpassing the power of all created beings. These influences of the Spirit — being so uniquely God's and involving such a high communication of Himself, making the creature a participant in the divine nature by the Spirit communicating Himself in His own proper nature — this is what I mean by 'divine' when I say that truly gracious affections arise from influences that are spiritual and divine.

Only the true saints have what is spiritual; others have nothing divine in this sense. It is not merely that they have less of this communication of the Spirit of God than the saints do — they have nothing of that nature or kind at all. The apostle James tells us that natural people do not have the Spirit. Christ teaches the necessity of the new birth — of being born of the Spirit — precisely because those born only of the flesh have only flesh and no Spirit (John 3:6). Unregenerate people do not have the Spirit of God dwelling in them in any degree — for the apostle teaches that all who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them belong to Christ (Romans 8:9-11). Having the Spirit of God is spoken of as a certain sign that a person will receive the eternal inheritance — it is described as the pledge of that inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). And having 'something of the Spirit' is mentioned as a sure sign of being in Christ: 'By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit' (1 John 4:13). Ungodly people are not merely short on the divine nature compared to the saints — they have no part in it at all, for being a 'partaker of the divine nature' is spoken of as the distinctive privilege of true saints (2 Peter 1:4). Ungodly people do not share in God's holiness (Hebrews 12:10). A natural person has no experi-

ence of any spiritual things. The apostle teaches that he is so completely without them that he knows nothing about them — they are utterly foreign to him. Talk of such things sounds like foolishness and nonsense to him; he simply does not understand what it means (1 Corinthians 2:14): 'The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.' To the same point, Christ teaches that the world is entirely unacquainted with the Spirit of God: 'The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him' (John 14:17). It is further evident that natural people have nothing in them of the same nature as true grace, because the apostle teaches that even those who go farthest in religion — among unregenerate people — have no true Christian love (1 Corinthians 13). Christ likewise rebuked the Pharisees — the highest claimants to religion of their day — by saying they did not have the love of God in them (John 5:42). Natural people therefore have no communion or fellowship with Christ — no real participation in Him — for this is spoken of as the distinctive privilege of the saints (1 John 1:3, 6-7; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9). Scripture also speaks of the actual presence of a gracious principle in the soul — even in its earliest, seed-like form — as incompatible with a person being in a state of sin (1 John 3:9). Unregenerate people are described in Scripture as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, and no spiritual existence. This is why conversion is so often compared to opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and a work of creation — in which creatures are made entirely new, born again as newborn children.

From all of this it is clear that the gracious influences the saints experience, and the effects of God's Spirit they are conscious of, are entirely above nature. They are altogether different in kind from anything people find within themselves by nature or through the exercise of natural capacities. No amount of improvement, elevation, or combination of natural qualities or principles will ever produce them — because they do not merely differ from natural experience in degree or circumstance, but differ in kind. They are of a nature vastly more excellent than anything natural. This is what I mean by supernatural when I say that gracious affections arise from influences that are supernatural.

From this it follows that in the gracious exercises and affections produced in the minds of the saints through the saving influences of the Spirit of God, there is a new inward perception — a new sensation of the mind — that is entirely different in its nature and kind from anything the mind had ever experienced before being sanctified. If God by His mighty power produces something that is new — not merely in degree or circumstance but in its whole nature, something that no enhancing or varying or combining of what was there before could ever produce — then, since the mind is a perceiving, thinking, conscious thing, something entirely new must be perceived or felt or thought. In other words, there is a new sensation or perception of the mind that is entirely of a new kind — a kind that no elevation, variation, or combination of previously existing perceptions could produce. Philosophers sometimes call this a new simple idea. If grace is, in the sense described above, an entirely new kind of principle, then its exercises are also entirely a new kind of exercise. And if the soul is conscious of a new kind of exercise — one it had no knowledge of before, and that no refine-

ment or combination of its former consciousness could ever produce or even approximate — then the mind has an entirely new kind of perception or sensation. This is what might be called a new spiritual sense: a principle of a new kind of perception or spiritual sensation, different in its whole nature from any former kind of sensation in the mind. Just as the sense of taste differs from all other senses, this new spiritual sense differs from all that came before. What a true saint perceives through this new spiritual sense in divine things is as entirely different from what natural people perceive in those same things as the sweet taste of honey differs from what a person knows about honey by only looking at it or touching it. The spiritual perceptions of a sanctified person differ from those of natural people not merely as two perceptions of the same sense might differ from each other — but as the perceptions of entirely different senses differ. This is why the work of the Spirit of God in regeneration is so often compared in Scripture to being given a new sense — to receiving eyes that see and ears that hear, to having deaf ears opened, to having eyes opened that were born blind, to being turned from darkness to light. And because this spiritual sense is immeasurably the most noble and excellent — and without it all other capacities and faculties are useless and empty — the giving of this new sense, together with its blessed fruits and effects in the soul, is compared to a raising of the dead and to a new creation.

This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that accompany it, are not new faculties — they are new principles of nature. By 'principle of nature' I mean the foundation laid in nature — whether old or new — for a particular kind or manner of exercise of the soul's faculties. It is a natural habit or foundation for action

that gives a person the ability and disposition to exercise the faculties in a certain kind of way — so that exercising the faculties in that way can be called that person's nature. So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding — it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercise of the same faculty of understanding. Similarly, the new holy dispositions of the heart that accompany this new sense are not a new faculty of the will — they are a foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercise of the same faculty of will.

In all His operations on the minds of unregenerate people, the Spirit of God only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or in some way acts upon natural principles — He never gives a new spiritual principle. For example, when the Spirit gave visions to Balaam, He was only impressing a natural principle — the sense of sight — by directly exciting the ideas associated with that sense. There was nothing supernatural, spiritual, or divine about it. Similarly, when the Spirit impresses images on a person's imagination — whether in a dream or while awake — images of voices, shapes, or colors, He is only exciting the same kind of ideas the person has through natural senses. If God reveals to an unregenerate person some future fact — something they will later see or hear — this is not infusing a new spiritual principle or giving the ideas of a new spiritual sense. It is only impressing, in an extraordinary way, ideas that will later be received through sight or hearing. In the more ordinary influences of the Spirit on the hearts of sinners, He only assists natural principles to do more intensely what they do on their own by nature. The Spirit may assist a person's natural intelligence — as He assisted Bezaleel and Aholiab in the craftsmanship of the tabernacle. He may improve people's natural abilities in political

matters and strengthen their courage and other natural qualities — as He is said to have put His Spirit on the seventy elders and on Saul, giving him another heart. God may greatly assist natural people's reasoning about secular matters or about the doctrines of religion, and may greatly clarify their understanding of religious things in many respects — all without giving any spiritual sense. In those awakenings and convictions that unregenerate people experience, God is simply assisting the conscience — which is a natural principle — to do more fully what it naturally does. Conscience naturally gives people a sense of right and wrong and suggests the connection between conduct and consequences. The Spirit assists conscience to do this more effectively, helping it resist the numbing influence of worldly desires and pursuits. There are many other ways the Spirit acts upon, assists, and moves natural principles — but in all of these, it is nothing more than nature being moved, activated, and improved. There is nothing supernatural or divine in it. But in His spiritual influences on the hearts of His saints, the Spirit of God operates by infusing and exercising new, divine, and supernatural principles — principles that constitute a genuinely new and spiritual nature, vastly more noble and excellent than anything in unregenerate people.

From what has been said, it follows that all spiritual and gracious affections are accompanied by, and arise from, some perception or sensation of the mind that is entirely different — vastly different — from anything that is or can be in the mind of an unregenerate person. The natural person has no perception of it at all and no conception of it whatsoever (1 Corinthians 2:14). He can no more conceive of it than a person born without the sense of taste

can conceive of the sweetness of honey, or a person born deaf can conceive of the melody of music, or a person born blind can form any notion of the beauty of a rainbow.

But two things must be observed for a right understanding of this.

First, not everything that in any respect belongs to spiritual affections is new and entirely different from what unregenerate people can conceive or experience. Many things are common between gracious affections and other kinds of affections — many circumstances, accompanying features, and effects overlap. A saint's love for God has many qualities in common with a person's natural love for a close friend or family member. Love for God produces desires for God's honor and a desire to please Him — just as natural love for a friend produces desires for that friend's honor and a desire to please him. Love for God causes delight in thinking about God, in God's presence, in becoming like God, and in enjoying God — just as natural love works similarly toward its object. Many more parallels could be named. But the perception the saint has of God's loveliness, and the sensation and kind of delight that this perception produces — which is the very core and essence of his love — is entirely distinct from anything an unregenerate person has or can conceive of. Even in the things that seem to be common, there is something peculiar. Both spiritual and natural love produce desires for the beloved — but they are not the same kind of desires. There is a sensation in the spiritual desires of one who loves God that is entirely different from all natural desires. Both spiritual and natural love bring delight in the beloved — but the sensations of delight are not the same; they are entirely and profoundly different. Unregenerate people may have some understanding of many

things about spiritual affections, but there is something at the core of these affections — the very heart of them — about which they have no more conception than a person born blind has of colors.

This can be illustrated clearly with an example. Imagine two men: one is born without a sense of taste, the other has it. The one with taste loves honey and greatly delights in it because he knows its sweetness. The one without taste loves certain sounds and colors. There are many things both men have in common in their love for their respective objects — each desires and takes delight in what he loves, each grieves when the beloved object is absent, and so on. But the perception of honey's excellence and sweetness that the one who can taste it experiences — the very foundation of his love — is entirely different from anything the other man has or can conceive of. And the delight the first man has in honey is wholly different from anything the second can imagine, though both men delight in their beloved objects. Now suppose both men love the same thing — a beautiful and delicious fruit. The man with taste loves it not only because he has seen its beautiful colors, but because he knows its sweet flavor. The other man, completely ignorant of the taste, loves it only for its appearance. Many things seem to be similar between these two men: both love, both desire, both delight. But the love, desire, and delight of the one are altogether different from those of the other. The difference between the love of an unregenerate person and a spiritual person is like this — only it must be noted that in one respect the difference is far greater: the kinds of excellence perceived in spiritual things by these two kinds of people are vastly more different from each other than the different kinds of excellence perceived in delicious fruit by a man who can taste and a man who cannot. In another respect the differ-

ence may not be as great — because the spiritual person may have a spiritual sense and taste to perceive that divine and most distinctive excellence only in small beginnings and in a very imperfect degree.

Second, on the other hand, it must be observed that an unregenerate person may have religious perceptions and affections that are in many respects very new and surprising to him — beyond anything he had previously conceived — and yet what he experiences may have nothing in common with the exercises of a new spiritual principle or the sensations of a new spiritual sense. His affections may be very new because natural principles have been extraordinarily stirred to an unusual degree, with many new circumstances, new combinations of natural affections, and new arrangements of ideas. This may result from some extraordinarily powerful influence of Satan and some great delusion. But it is still nothing more than nature in extraordinary activity. Consider a poor man who has lived all his life in a cottage and never ventured beyond the small village where he was born. Suppose someone, as a joke, brings him to a magnificent city and a royal palace, dresses him in princely robes, seats him on a throne with the royal crown on his head, has nobles and lords bow before him, and convinces him that he is now a glorious king. The ideas he would form and the emotions he would experience would in many respects be very new — unlike anything he had previously imagined. But it is nothing more than natural principles being stirred and elevated to an extraordinary degree, with a new arrangement of ideas he already had by nature. Nothing like a new sense has been given to him.

Taken together, it is clearly evident that all truly gracious affections arise from the special and distinctive influences of the Spirit, producing in the souls of the saints a sensible effect or sensation that is entirely different from anything an unregenerate person could possibly experience. The difference is not merely in degree or circumstance but in its whole nature. An unregenerate person cannot experience anything that is individually the same — nor can he experience anything that is not vastly and profoundly different from it in kind. It is something that the power of human beings or evil spirits is entirely insufficient to produce, or anything of the same nature.

I have dwelt extensively on this matter because it is of great importance and usefulness for clearly exposing and demonstrating the delusions of Satan in the many kinds of false religious affections by which great numbers of people are deceived — and have likely been deceived throughout the history of the Christian church. It also serves to settle and determine many points of doctrine regarding the operations of the Spirit of God and the nature of true grace.

Now let me apply these things to the purpose of this discussion.

From what has been said, it is clear that impressions made on a person's imagination — imaginary mental images of God, Christ, heaven, or anything else relating to religion — have nothing in them that is spiritual or of the nature of true grace. Such things may accompany what is spiritual and may be mixed with it, but in themselves they contain nothing spiritual and are no part of gracious experience.

For the benefit of readers less familiar with these terms, let me explain what is meant by impressions on the imagination and imaginary ideas. The imagination is the power of the mind by which a person can form a concept or mental image of external things — that is, the kinds of things perceived by the outward senses — even when those things are not present and not actually being sensed. The word comes from 'image,' because through this faculty a person can have an image of some external thing in the mind even when that thing is not actually present or anything like it. All the things we perceive through the five external senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch — are external things. When a person has a mental image of any of these kinds of things without actually seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling them, that is imagination — and those mental images are imaginary ideas. When such images are strongly pressed on the mind and become very vivid — almost as if the person were actually seeing or hearing them — that is called an impression on the imagination. Colors, shapes, and the appearance of a face are external things, because they are the kind of things perceived by the external sense of sight. So when a person has a vivid mental image of a shape, a color, or a face, that is imagination. If a person forms a mental image of a kind of light or darkness like what is perceived through sight, that is an imaginary idea of outward light. If a person has a mental image of marks on paper — letters or words written in a book — that is an external and imaginary idea of the kind of thing sometimes perceived by the physical eyes. Similarly, when we form mental images of things we perceive through hearing — sounds, voices, or spoken words — these are imaginary ideas of external things, perceived through the external sense of hearing. When these become

so vivid as to seem almost like sounds actually heard with the ears, that is an impression on the imagination. The same could be said of mental images arising from the other three senses of smell, taste, and touch.

Many people who have had such experiences have wrongly supposed them to be spiritual discoveries. Some have had vivid mental images of an external figure with a beautiful face, and have called this 'spiritually seeing Christ.' Some have had impressed on them images of a great outward light, and have called this 'a spiritual discovery of God's or Christ's glory.' Some have had images of Christ hanging on the cross, with blood flowing from His wounds, and have called this 'a spiritual sight of Christ crucified and the way of salvation through His blood.' Some have seen Him with His arms open as if to embrace them, and have called this 'a discovery of the sufficiency of Christ's grace and love.' Some have had vivid mental images of heaven, of Christ seated on His throne, and of shining ranks of saints and angels, and have called this 'seeing heaven opened to them.' Some from time to time have had a vivid image of a beautiful face smiling at them, and have called this 'a spiritual discovery of Christ's love to their souls and a tasting of the love of Christ.' They consider it sufficient evidence that these are spiritual discoveries — and that they see them spiritually — because they say they do not see these things with their physical eyes but in their hearts, since they can see them even with their eyes closed. In a similar way, some people's imaginations have been impressed with ideas of the sense of hearing — they have had images of words as if spoken to them, sometimes the words of Scripture and sometimes other words. They have had images of Christ speaking comforting words to them. These things they have called

the inward call of Christ, hearing the voice of Christ spiritually in their hearts, having the witness of the Spirit, and the inward testimony of Christ's love, and similar expressions.

Less discerning and thoughtful people are more easily led to think of these things as spiritual, because spiritual things are invisible and cannot be pointed to or directly described. We are therefore forced to use figurative language when speaking of them, borrowing names from external and physical objects to describe them. For example, we call a clear understanding of spiritual things 'light,' and having such an understanding of something 'seeing' that thing. We describe being convinced in the mind and persuaded by Christ's word in the gospel as 'spiritually hearing the call of Christ.' Scripture itself is full of such figurative expressions. When people frequently hear these expressions — about the need to have their eyes opened, to see spiritual things, to see Christ in His glory, to receive the inward call, and similar descriptions — they naturally and mistakenly look and wait for some kind of external vision or imaginary sight such as those described above. When these experiences come, they become convinced that now their eyes have been opened, now Christ has revealed Himself to them, and they are His children. As a result they are greatly moved and elevated by their apparent deliverance and happiness, and many kinds of emotions are suddenly stirred to a powerful pitch.

But it is abundantly clear that such imaginary ideas have nothing in them that is spiritual and divine in the sense that has been demonstrated — the sense in which all gracious experiences are spiritual and divine. These external images are not the kind of things that are entirely and in their whole nature different from what people have by nature, not vastly above any sensation a per-

son could have through a natural sense or principle, not requiring a new spiritual and divine sense to receive them. They are ideas of the same kind as those we have through the external senses — which are among the lower powers of human nature. They are merely ideas of external objects, of the outward and sensory kind. They are sensations of the mind (differing not in kind but only in circumstances) that arise from those natural principles common to us and to animals — namely, the five external senses. It is a poor and degrading notion of spiritual sense to suppose that it is merely the ability to conceive or imagine the kind of ideas we receive through our animal senses — senses that animals possess just as fully as we do. It is, in effect, to reduce Christ or the divine nature in the soul to something merely animal. There is nothing lacking in the soul as it exists by nature that would prevent it from having all these external imaginary ideas without any new principle being added. An unregenerate person is just as capable as a regenerate person of having vivid mental images of shapes, colors, and sounds in their absence. There is therefore nothing supernatural about such images. Experience abundantly confirms that what makes a person more capable of such vivid imaginative impressions is not spiritual advancement or the perfecting of human nature — on the contrary, bodily and mental weakness, and physical disorders, make people far more susceptible to such impressions.

A truly spiritual sensation is extraordinary not only in the manner of its coming into the mind but also in its very nature — it is entirely different from anything people have or can have in a state of nature, as has been shown. But with these external imaginary ideas, while the way they come into the mind is sometimes unusual, the ideas themselves are not better for that. They are still

the same kind of ideas people receive through their senses — no higher in kind, no better in quality. For example, a mental image of Christ hanging on the cross and shedding His blood is no better in itself than the visual experience that the Jews who stood around the cross and watched with their own eyes had at that moment. The imaginary idea of a great outward brightness and glory of God is no better than what the rebellious congregation in the wilderness saw with their physical eyes at Mount Sinai, or better than what countless condemned people will see on the Day of Judgment — when they will have a vivid experience of an outward glory of Christ ten thousand times greater than anything anyone has yet conceived in imagination. Indeed, an image of Christ formed in the imagination is not, in its own nature, of any higher kind than the mental image Catholics form of Christ by looking at the beautiful and moving images of Him in their churches — though the manner of receiving the idea may differ. Nor are the affections such images produce — when those affections are built primarily on imagination — any better than the emotions stirred in simple people by looking at religious images, which are sometimes very intense, especially when those images are made by priestly art to appear to move, speak, or weep. The way a person receives these imaginary ideas does not change the nature of the ideas themselves. However they are received, they remain external ideas — ideas of outward appearances — and are therefore not spiritual. Even if God Himself were to impress such external images on a person's mind by His immediate power, they would still not be spiritual. They would be no more than a common work of the Spirit of God. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Balaam, on whom God Himself impressed a clear and vivid outward image of Jesus Christ

as 'the star rising out of Jacob' — when he 'heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance' (Numbers 24:16-17). And yet Balaam had no spiritual discovery of Christ whatsoever. That Day Star never spiritually rose in his heart, for he remained an unregenerate man.

Since these external imaginary ideas have nothing divine or spiritual in their nature, and nothing beyond what unregenerate people — without any new principle — are naturally capable of, there is also nothing in their nature that requires the peculiar, unparalleled, and extraordinary exercise of God's glorious power that is needed to produce true grace. There appears to be nothing in their nature that is beyond the power of the devil. It is certainly not beyond Satan's power to suggest thoughts to people — for without that ability he could not tempt them to sin. And if he can suggest any thoughts or ideas at all, then imaginary ideas — ideas of external things — are clearly not beyond his power, since external ideas are the lowest kind of ideas. These imaginary ideas may be produced simply by impressions made on the body — by affecting the brain and the body's physical processes. Abundant experience shows that changes in the body will produce imaginary ideas in the mind, as is frequently seen in cases of high fever, deep melancholy, and similar conditions. These external imaginary ideas are as far below the higher intellectual exercises of the soul as the body is a lesser part of the human person than the soul.

Not only is there nothing in the nature of external imaginary ideas that places them beyond the devil's power — it is certain that the devil can and has produced exactly such ideas. It was external imaginary ideas that he excited in the dreams and visions of the

false prophets of old, who were under the influence of lying spirits — as we repeatedly read in Scripture (Deuteronomy 13:1; 1 Kings 22:22; Isaiah 28:7; Ezekiel 13:7; Zechariah 13:4). It was external imaginary ideas that he regularly stirred in the minds of pagan priests, magicians, and sorcerers in their visions and trances. And it was an external imaginary idea that he excited in the mind of Jesus Christ Himself when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory — kingdoms that were not actually within sight.

If Satan or any created being has the power to impress the mind with outward imaginary representations, then no particular kind of outward representation can serve as evidence of divine power. It takes no more power to represent the image of a human being to the imagination than to represent the image of anything else. No higher kind of power is required to form one bodily shape or color in the brain than another. It takes no more glorious power to represent the form of a human body — even a beautiful one with a gentle smile, open arms, or blood flowing from hands, feet, and side — than to represent the shape of a stick or block of wood. Whatever power can represent blackness or darkness to the imagination can also represent white and shining brightness. The same kind of skill and power that can paint a straw or a stick of wood on paper or canvas — the same kind, only perhaps developed further — is sufficient to paint a human body in great beauty and royal majesty, or a magnificent city paved with gold, filled with light and a glorious throne. Similarly, the same kind of power needed to produce one of these images in the brain is the same kind needed to produce the other. The same kind of power that can put ink on paper can also put gold leaf on it. Therefore it is evident beyond

question: if we grant that it is within the devil's power to make any external imaginary representation at all in the mind — as it surely is, and no one who believes in a devil with any agency among people has ever doubted this — then it is equally and demonstrably evident that a created power can extend to every kind of external appearance and idea in the mind.

From this it is again clear that such things have nothing in them that is spiritual, supernatural, and divine in the sense already established — the sense in which all truly gracious experiences are spiritual, supernatural, and divine. Although external imaginary ideas do, through the nature of human beings, commonly accompany spiritual experiences to some degree, they are no part of spiritual experience — any more than the circulation of blood or the beating of the pulse that accompanies experiences is part of spiritual experience. Without doubt, through human weakness in the present state — and especially through the frail constitution of some people — very strong gracious affections can excite vivid imaginary ideas. But it is equally beyond doubt that when a person's affections are founded on imaginary ideas — which is frequently the case — those affections are merely natural and common, because they rest on a foundation that is not spiritual. Such affections are therefore entirely different from gracious affections, which, as has been proved, always arise from operations that are spiritual and divine.

These imaginary ideas often stir the carnal emotions of people to an extremely high pitch. This is no wonder — when those experiencing them are under the ignorant but unquestioning belief that

these are divine manifestations, in which the great God has directly revealed Himself to their souls and is giving them extraordinary testimonies of His special and high favor toward them.

It is also clear from everything that has been observed and proved about how gracious operations and effects in the heart are spiritual, supernatural, and divine, that the immediate suggesting of words of Scripture to the mind has nothing in it that is spiritual.

Something has already been said about this, and what has been said may be sufficient to establish it. But if the reader keeps in mind what has been said about the nature of spiritual influences and effects, it will be even more apparent that this is not a spiritual effect. No person of ordinary understanding would say or believe that bringing words to the mind — whatever words they may be — is an effect of the kind that is impossible for an unregenerate person to experience, or anything like it. Nor does bringing words to mind require any new divine sense in the soul. Nor would anyone say that bringing sounds or letters to the mind is an effect so high, holy, and excellent that no created power could be its cause.

When the Spirit suggests words of Scripture to the mind, He is simply exciting in the mind ideas of certain sounds or letters — which is one way of exciting ideas in the imagination. Sounds and letters are external things, perceived by the external senses of sight and hearing. Ideas of certain marks on paper — such as letters of the alphabet in any arrangement — or of spoken sounds, are just as much external imaginary ideas as ideas of any other shapes or sounds. Therefore, by what has already been said about external imaginary ideas, it is evident that these are not spiritual in nature. When the Spirit of God suggests such letters or sounds to the mind, this is a common, not a special or gracious, influence of that

Spirit. It follows that affections which have this kind of effect as their foundation are not spiritual or gracious affections. But let me be precise about what I am saying: when the extraordinary and immediate manner in which words of Scripture come to the mind is what excites the affections and is properly their foundation, then those affections are not spiritual. It is possible for a person to have gracious affections accompanying Scriptures that come to mind, with the Spirit of God using those Scriptures to stir those affections — when it is a spiritual sense, taste, or relish of the divine and excellent things contained in those Scriptures that excites the affections, not the extraordinary and sudden manner in which the words arrived. Such persons are moved by the instruction they receive from the words, by the view of the glorious things of God or Christ that those words contain and teach — not because the words came suddenly, as though someone had spoken them to them, leading them to conclude that God was directly addressing them. Very often, however, people are greatly moved on a quite different basis. Words of some great scriptural promise come suddenly to their minds, and they interpret those words as directed immediately by God to them — as if those words had at that moment come directly from God's mouth, spoken specifically to them. They take it as a divine voice immediately revealing their blessed condition and promising them great things. What elevates them is precisely this sense of direct, personal address. There is no new spiritual understanding of what the Scripture teaches, no new spiritual sense of the glorious things contained in that passage, that precedes their affection and serves as its foundation. The only new understanding they have — or think they have — is that the words were meant for them personally, because they came so suddenly and ex-

traordinarily. The affection is therefore built entirely on that imaginary impression — because it rests on a conclusion drawn from that impression. As has been shown, the sudden coming of the words to their minds is no evidence that the Spirit of God brought them in that manner. And even if it were true that God did bring those words to their minds, knowing that fact would not constitute spiritual knowledge — a person could know that words were suggested to them by God and yet have no spiritual understanding of what those words contain. So these affections, which are built on the notion that particular Scripture texts have been sent immediately and personally from God, rest on no spiritual foundation and are empty. If such persons were asked whether they have any new sense of the excellence of the things contained in those Scriptures, they would likely say yes without hesitation. But this is only true in a superficial way — they find the words sweet only because they have convinced themselves that those words were spoken directly to them. They embrace what those Scriptures say as excellent and wonderful things, but only because they believe the words are personally addressed to them. For instance, suppose the words that suddenly came to their minds were 'Do not fear — it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Having confidently concluded that these words were spoken directly from heaven to them — an immediate revelation that God was their Father and had given the kingdom to them — they are greatly moved and find the words sweet. They say these are excellent things contained in those words. But the reason the promise seems excellent to them is only that they believe it is made personally to them at that moment. Whatever sense they have of anything glorious in it comes only from self-love and from their imagined personal stake in the

words. There was no prior perception or sense of the holy and glorious nature of the kingdom of heaven, the spiritual glory of the God who gives it, or His excellent grace to sinful people in offering and giving them this kingdom of His own free will — no such perception preceding their imagined personal interest in these things, serving as the foundation of their affection and their hope of an interest in them. On the contrary, they first imagine they are personally addressed, then are greatly moved by that imagined personal address, and then declare these things to be excellent. The sudden and extraordinary manner in which the Scriptures came to their minds is plainly the first foundation of the whole — which is a clear sign of the serious delusion they are under.

Many people's first experience of comfort — what they call their conversion — follows this pattern. After a period of spiritual awakening and distress, some comforting promise suddenly and powerfully comes to their minds. The manner in which it comes leads them to conclude that God Himself sent it to them. This becomes the entire foundation of their faith, hope, and comfort. From this they take their first encouragement to trust in God and in Christ, believing that God has already revealed His love to them and already promised them eternal life through the Scripture that came to them in this way. This is deeply mistaken. Anyone with basic knowledge of religious truth knows that God reveals His love to people and their interest in His promises after they have believed — not before. They must first believe before they have any interest in the promises to be revealed to them. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of truth and not of lies. He does not bring Scripture texts to people's minds to reveal to them that they are already interested in God's favor and promises when in fact they have not yet believed

and have no such interest. That would be the case if God's bringing a Scripture text to a person's mind — to reveal that their sins are forgiven, or that it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom, or anything of that nature — preceded and served as the foundation of their first faith. No promise of the covenant of grace belongs to any person until that person has first believed in Christ — for it is by faith alone that we come to have an interest in Christ and in the promises of the new covenant made in Him. Therefore, whatever spirit applies the promises of that covenant to a person who has not yet believed, as though those promises already belong to them, must be a lying spirit. And any faith that is first built on such an application of promises is built on a lie. It is not God's way to bring comforting Scripture texts to give people assurance of His love and of their salvation before they have exercised saving, trusting faith. Even if the Scripture that comes to a person's mind is not strictly a promise but an invitation, the situation is no better if the person takes the sudden or unusual manner of the invitation's coming to their mind as the ground for concluding they are truly invited. That is not genuine faith, because it is built on a false foundation. True faith is not built on something so uncertain. The judgment that a particular text was directly sent by God to a person at a particular moment — because of how it arrived — is an entirely uncertain and unreliable judgment, as has been shown. It is therefore a false and shifting foundation for faith, and any faith built on it is false. The only sure foundation for a person to believe they are invited to receive the blessings of the gospel is that God's Word declares that people with such qualifications as they have are invited — and God who says so is true and cannot lie. Once a sinner is genuinely convinced of God's truthfulness and that

Scripture is His Word, that person needs nothing more to satisfy them that they are invited. Scripture is full of invitations to sinners — to the greatest of sinners — to come and receive the blessings of the gospel. No new, direct word from God is needed; what God has already spoken is more than enough.

Just as the first comfort of many people and their affections at the time of their supposed conversion are built on such foundations as these, so also are their subsequent joys, hopes, and other affections. From time to time they have particular Scripture words — sweet declarations and promises — suggested to their minds, and because of the manner in which they come, they believe these were sent immediately from God to them at that precise moment. They treat these as their warrant to claim the promises for themselves, and they make the manner of the words' coming the main ground for applying the promises to themselves and for the comfort and confidence they derive from them. In this way they imagine a kind of ongoing conversation is taking place between God and them — that God, from time to time, is directly speaking to them, settling their doubts, assuring them of His love, promising them help and blessing in particular situations, and clearly revealing their share in eternal blessings. The result is that they are frequently moved to sudden and turbulent joys, mixed with strong confidence and a high opinion of themselves. But the main foundation of these joys and this confidence is not anything contained in or taught by those Scripture passages as they stand in the Bible — it is the manner in which those words came to them. This is a clear sign of their delusion. No particular promise in God's Word belongs to a saint in any special exclusive way, or is addressed to any individual saint more than to others — all the promises of the

covenant of grace are equally his, equally made to him, equally spoken to him. It is true that some promises may fit a person's circumstances more closely than others, and the Spirit may help a person to understand some promises more clearly than others, or to feel more deeply the preciousness and glory of the blessings they contain. But no promise is exclusively 'sent' to one individual in the way these people imagine.

But at this point someone may ask: Is there no such thing as a particular, personal application of Scripture promises by the Spirit of God? There is certainly such a thing as a spiritual and personal application of Scripture passages and promises to the souls of people. But it is equally certain that the nature of this application is completely misunderstood by many people — to the great harm of their own souls, giving Satan a great advantage against them, against true religion, and against the church of God. A spiritual application of a Scripture promise does not consist in its being suddenly brought to mind by some external agent, pressed into the thoughts with the strong impression that it is spoken directly and specifically to them at that moment. There is nothing in this effect that gives evidence of the hand of God, as many sad instances have proved. Such an effect is not a spiritual application of Scripture at all — there is nothing in its nature that is beyond the devil's power, since there is nothing in the nature of the effect that is spiritual, nothing involving any vital communication from God. A truly spiritual application of God's Word is vastly higher in nature — as far above the devil's power as it would be beyond his power to apply the Word to a dead body so as to raise it to life, or to a stone so as to transform it into an angel. A spiritual application of God's Word consists in applying it to the heart through spiritually enlightening

and sanctifying influences. A spiritual application of an invitation or offer of the gospel consists in giving the soul a spiritual sense and taste of the holy and divine blessings being offered — along with a sense of the wonderful grace of the One making the offer, of His holy excellence and faithfulness to fulfill what He offers, and of His glorious all-sufficiency. This draws and leads the heart to embrace the offer and thereby gives the person evidence of their own true interest in what has been offered. Similarly, a spiritual application of the promises of Scripture for the comfort of the saints consists in enlightening their minds to see the holy excellence and sweetness of the promised blessings, and the holy excellence, faithfulness, and all-sufficiency of the One who promised. This draws their hearts to embrace both the Promiser and the thing promised. By this means it produces the visible and felt workings of grace in them, enabling them to see their grace and so their right to the promise. An application that does not consist in this divine illumination and enlightening of the mind — but only in words being pressed into the thoughts as if immediately spoken, causing people to believe on no other basis that the promise is theirs — is a blind application. It belongs to the spirit of darkness, not to the Spirit of light.

When people's affections are stirred in this way, those affections are not truly raised by the Word of God. Scripture is not their real foundation. It is not anything contained in the Scripture texts that come to their minds that raises their affections. What actually moves them is the strange manner in which the words come to their minds — and a conclusion they draw from that manner: namely, that their sins are forgiven, or that the Father is pleased to give them specifically the kingdom, or something of that kind. But

this conclusion is not actually contained in those Scripture passages — nor in any other Scripture passage. The Bible contains promises declaring that people of such and such qualifications are forgiven and loved by God. But the Bible contains no propositions declaring that specific individuals — regardless of and prior to any known qualifications — are forgiven and loved by God. When people are comforted and moved by such a proposition, they are being moved by a different word — a newly invented word, not any word of God contained in the Bible. This is how many people are vainly moved and deceived.

It is also plain from what has been demonstrated that no revelation of hidden facts by immediate suggestion has anything in it that is spiritual and divine in the sense in which truly gracious effects and operations are spiritual and divine.

By 'secret facts' I mean things that have happened, are happening, or will happen — things that are secret in the sense that they do not appear to the senses, cannot be known by reasoning from evidence, and are not known by any other means except by the direct, immediate suggestion of the ideas of those things to the mind. For example: suppose it were revealed to me that next year this country would be invaded by a fleet from France, or that certain people would then be converted, or that I myself would then be converted — not by enabling me to reason out these events from what is currently visible in the course of events, but by immediately suggesting and strongly impressing on my mind the idea of these facts in an extraordinary way, with a strong inner conviction that these things would come to pass. Or suppose it were revealed to me that on this day a battle is being fought between the armies of certain powers in Europe, or that a certain European ruler was

converted today, or has been in a converted state since a past conversion, or that one of my neighbors is converted, or that I myself am converted — not by having any other evidence of these facts from which I reason, but purely by an immediate and extraordinary suggestion of these ideas with a strong impression of them on my mind. This is a revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion, just as surely as if the facts were future. Whether the facts are past, present, or future makes no difference, as long as they are hidden from my senses and reason, not spoken of in Scripture, and not known to me by any means other than immediate suggestion. If it is revealed to me that a certain revolution took place today in the Ottoman Empire, it is exactly the same kind of revelation as if it were revealed to me that such a revolution would take place one year from today. Although one is present and the other future, both are equally hidden from me apart from immediate revelation. When Samuel told Saul that the donkeys he had gone looking for had been found, and that his father had stopped worrying about the donkeys and was now worried about him, this was the same kind of revelation as when he told Saul that on the plain of Tabor he would meet three men going up to worship God at Bethel (1 Samuel 10:2-3) — even though one of these facts was still future and the other was not. Similarly, when Elisha told the king of Israel the words that the king of Syria had spoken in his private bedroom, this was the same kind of revelation as when he foretold many future events.

It is clear that this kind of revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion has nothing of the nature of a spiritual and divine operation in the sense already described. There is nothing in the nature of the perceptions or ideas themselves — the ones excited in

the mind — that is divinely excellent and vastly above all the ideas of unregenerate people, even if the manner in which the ideas were produced is extraordinary. In genuinely spiritual things, as has been shown, it is not only the manner of producing the effect that is divine — the effect itself is divine, and vastly above anything that can exist in an unsanctified mind. But the simple having of ideas of facts — setting aside the manner of their production — is nothing beyond what the minds of wicked people are capable of. All wicked people either have now or will have knowledge of the truth of the greatest and most important facts that ever have been, are, or will be.

As for the extraordinary manner of producing the ideas or perception of facts by immediate suggestion, there is nothing in it that the minds of unregenerate people are incapable of while remaining unregenerate — as is clearly demonstrated in the case of Balaam and others in Scripture. Therefore it is clear that nothing about the immediate suggestion of secret facts is spiritual in the sense that gracious operations have been proved to be spiritual. If there is nothing in the ideas themselves that is holy and divine — nothing beyond what may exist in an unsanctified mind — then God can place those ideas in the mind by immediate power without sanctifying it. Just as there is nothing in the idea of a rainbow that is holy or divine — and therefore nothing preventing an unsanctified mind from having that idea — so God can, if He pleases and when He pleases, immediately and in an extraordinary manner excite that idea in an unsanctified mind. Similarly, there is nothing in the idea or knowledge that such and such particular people are forgiven and accepted by God and entitled to heaven that unsanctified minds cannot have — and in fact will have, concerning many

people, at the Day of Judgment. Therefore God can, if He pleases, extraordinarily and immediately suggest this to and impress it upon an unsanctified mind now. There is nothing lacking in an unsanctified mind that would prevent such a suggestion or impression, and nothing in its nature that necessarily excludes it.

Nor do these suggestions of secret facts become spiritual or divine if they are accompanied by words of Scripture that are simultaneously and extraordinarily brought to mind — words about some other fact that seems somewhat similar. The suggestion of Scripture words is no more divine than the suggestion of the facts themselves, as has just been demonstrated. Two effects that are neither of them spiritual cannot together make up one combined effect that is spiritual.

Hence it follows, from what has been already shown, and often repeated, that those Affections which are properly founded on such immediate Suggestions, or supposed Suggestions of secret Facts, are not gracious Affections. Not but that it is possible that such Suggestions may **be the Occasion**, or **Cause** of gracious Affections; for so may a Mistake and Delusion; but it is never properly the **Foundation** of gracious Affections: For gracious Affections, as has been shown, are all the Effects of an Influence and Operation which is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. But there are many Affections, and high Affections, which some have, that have such Kind of Suggestions or Revelations for their very Foundation: They look upon these as spiritual Discoveries; which is a gross Delusion; and this Delusion is truly the Spring whence their Affections flow.

Here it may be proper to observe, that it is exceeding manifest from what has been said, that what many Persons call the **Witness of the Spirit** that they are the Children of God, has nothing in it spiritual and divine; and consequently that the Affections built upon it, are vain and delusive. That which many call the Witness of the Spirit, is no other than an immediate Suggestion and Impression of that Fact, otherwise secret, that they are converted, or made the Children of God, and so that their Sins are pardoned, and that God has given them a Title to Heaven. This Kind of Knowledge, **namely** Knowing that a certain Person is converted, and delivered from Hell, and entitled to Heaven, is no divine Sort of Knowledge in itself. This Sort of Fact, is not that which requires any higher or more divine Kind of Suggestion, in order to impress it on the Mind, than any other Fact which **Balaam** had impressed on his Mind. It requires no higher Sort of Idea or Sensation, for a Man to have the Apprehension of his own Conversion impressed upon him, than to have the Apprehension of his Neighbour's Conversion, in like Manner, impressed: But God, if he pleased, might impress the Knowledge of this Fact, that he had forgiven his Neighbour's Sins, and given him a Title to Heaven, as well as any other Fact, without any Communication of his Holiness: The Excellency and Importance of the Fact, do not at all hinder a natural Man's Mind being susceptible of an immediate Suggestion and Impression of it. **Balaam** had as excellent, and important, and glorious Facts as this, immediately impressed on his Mind, without any gracious Influence; as particularly, the coming of Christ, and his setting up his glorious Kingdom, and the Blessedness of the spiritual **Israel** in his peculiar Favour and their Happiness living and dying. Yea **Abimelech** King of the

Philistines, had God's special Favour to a particular Person, even **Abraham**, revealed to him, **Genesis** 20:6, 7. So it seems that he revealed to **Laban** his special Favour to **Jacob**, see **Genesis** 31:24 and **Psalms** 105:15. And if a truly good Man should have an immediate Revelation or Suggestion from God, after the like Manner, concerning his Favour to his Neighbour, or himself; it would be no higher Kind of influence; it would be no more than a common Sort of Influence of God's Spirit; as the Gift of Prophecy, and all Revelation by immediate Suggestion is; see 1 **Corinthians** 13:2. And though it be true, that it is not possible that a natural Man should have that individual Suggestion from the Spirit of God, that he is converted, because it is not true; yet that does not arise from the Nature of the influence, or because that Kind of Influence which suggests such excellent Facts, is too high for him to be the Subject of; but purely from the want of a Fact to be revealed. The Influence which immediately suggests this Fact, when it is true, is of no different Kind from that which immediately suggests other true Facts: And so the Kind and Nature of the Influence, is not above what is common to natural Men, with good Men.

But this is a mean ignoble Notion of the Witness of the Spirit of God given to his dear Children, to suppose that there is nothing in the Kind and Nature of that Influence of the Spirit of God, in imparting this high and glorious Benefit but what is common to natural Men, or which Men are capable of, and be in the mean Time altogether unsanctified, and the Children of Hell; and that therefore the Benefit or Gift itself has nothing of the holy Nature of the Spirit of God in it, nothing of a vital Communication of that Spirit. This Notion greatly debases that high and most exalted Kind of

Influence and Operation of the Spirit, which there is in the true Witness of the Spirit. That which is called **the Witness of the Spirit**, Romans 8, is elsewhere in the new Testament called **the Seal of the Spirit**, 2 Corinthians 1:22, **Ephesians** 1:13 and 4:30, alluding to the Seal of Princes, annexed to the commissions, by which they advanced any of their Subjects to some high Honour and Dignity, or peculiar Privilege in the Kingdom, as a Token of their special Favour. Which is an Evidence that the Seal of the Spirit of the Prince of Princes, in sealing his Favourites, is far from being of a common Kind; and that there is no Effect of God's Spirit whatsoever, which is in its Nature more divine; nothing more holy, peculiar, inimitable and distinguishing of them, as nothing is more Royal than the royal Seal; nothing more sacred, that belongs to a Prince, and more peculiarly denoting what belongs to him; it being the very End and Design of it, to be the most peculiar Stamp and Confirmation of the royal Authority, and great Note of Distinction, whereby that which proceeds from the King, or belongs to him, may be known from every Thing else. And therefore undoubtedly the Seal of the great King of Heaven and Earth enstamped on the Heart, is something high and holy in its own Nature, some excellent Communication from the infinite Fountain of divine Beauty and Glory; and not merely a making known a secret Fact by Revelation or Suggestion; which is a Sort of Influence of the Spirit of God, that the Children of the Devil have often been the Subjects of. The Seal of the Spirit is a Kind of Effect of the Spirit of God on the Heart, which natural Men, while such, are so far from a Capacity of being the Subjects of, that they can have no Manner of Notion or Idea of it; agreeable to Revelation 2:17. **To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden Manna; and I**

will give him a white Stone, and in the Stone a new Name written, which no Man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. There is all Reason to suppose that what is here spoken of, is the same Mark, Evidence, or blessed Token of special Favour, which is elsewhere called the **Seal of the Spirit**.

What has misled many in their notion of that influence of the Spirit of God we are speaking of, is the word witness, its being called the **Witness** of the Spirit. Hence they have taken it, not to be any effect or work of the Spirit upon the heart, giving evidence, from whence men may argue that they are the children of God; but an inward suggestion, as though God inwardly spoke to the man, and testified to him, and told him that he was his child, by a kind of a secret voice, or impression. Not observing the sense in which the word **Witness**, or **Testimony** is often used in the New Testament; where such terms often signify, not only a mere declaring and affecting a thing to be true, but holding forth evidence from whence a thing may be argued and proved to be true. Thus, **Hebrews 2:4**, God is said to **bear Witness, with Signs and Wonders, and diverse miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost**. Now these miracles, here spoken of, are called God's witness, not because they are of the nature of affections, but evidences and proofs. So **Acts 14:3**. **Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord; which gave testimony unto the Word of his Grace; and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands**. And **John 6:36**. **But I have greater Witness than that of John; for the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me**. Again, **Chapter 10:25**. **The Works that I do in my Father's**

Name, they bear Witness of me. So the water and the blood are said to bear witness, 1 **John** 5:8, not that they spoke or asserted anything, but they were proofs and evidences. So God's works of providence, in the rain and fruitful seasons, are spoken of as witnesses of God's being and goodness, **that is** they were evidences of these things. And when the Scripture speaks of the **Seal** of the Spirit, it is an expression which properly denotes, not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit, that is left as a divine mark upon the soul, to be an evidence, by which God's children might be known. The seals of princes were the distinguishing marks of princes: And thus God's seal is spoken of as God's mark. Revelation 7:3. **Hurt not the Earth, neither the Sea, or the Trees, till we have sealed the Servants of our God in their Foreheads;** together with Ezekiel 9:4. **Set a Mark upon the Foreheads of the Men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.** When God sets his seal on a man's heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp, or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the conscience, that the subject of it is the child of God, is the very thing which in Scripture is called **the Seal of the Spirit**, and **the Witness**, or **Evidence of the Spirit**. And this image instamped by the Spirit on God's children's hearts, is his own image: That is the evidence by which they are known to be God's children, that they have the image of their Father stamped upon their hearts by the Spirit of Adoption. Seals anciently had engraven on them two things, **namely** The image and the name of the person whose seal it was. Therefore when Christ says to his spouse, Canticles 8:6, **Set**

me as a Seal upon thine Heart, as a Seal upon thine arm; it is as much as to say, Let my name and image remain impressed there. The seals of princes were wont to bear their image; so that what they set their seal and royal mark upon, had their image left upon it. It was the manner of princes of old to have their image engraven on their jewels and precious stones; and the image of **Augustus** engraven on a precious stone, was used as the seal of the Roman Emperors, in Christ's and the Apostles' times. And the saints are the jewels of Jesus Christ, the great Potentate, who has the possession of the empire of the universe: And these jewels have his image enstamped upon them, by his royal signet, which is the Holy Spirit. And this is undoubtedly what the Scripture means by the seal of the Spirit; especially when it is enstamped in so fair and clear a manner, as to be plain to the eye of conscience; which is what the Scripture calls **the Witness of the Spirit**. This is, truly an effect that is **spiritual, supernatural, and divine**. This is, in itself, of a holy nature, being a communication of the divine nature and beauty. That kind of influence of the Spirit which gives and leaves this stamp upon the heart, is such that no natural man can be the subject of anything of the like nature with it. This is the highest sort of witness of the Spirit, which it is possible the soul should be the subject of: if there were any such thing as a witness of the Spirit by immediate suggestion or revelation, this would be vastly more noble and excellent, and as much above it as the heaven is above the earth. This the Devil cannot imitate: As to an inward suggestion of the Spirit of God, by a kind of secret voice speaking, and immediately asserting and revealing a fact, he can

do that which is a thousand times so like to this, as he can to that holy and divine effect, or work of the Spirit of God, which has been now spoken of.

Another thing which is a full proof that the seal of the Spirit is no revelation of any fact by immediate suggestion, but is grace itself in the soul, is that the **Seal of the Spirit** is called the **Earnest of the Spirit**, in the Scripture. It is very plain, that the seal of the Spirit is the same thing with the earnest of the Spirit, by 2 Corinthians 1:22. **Who hath also sealed Us, and given the Earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts.** And Ephesians 1:13, 14. **In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of Promise; which is the Earnest of our Inheritance, until the Redemption of the purchased Possession, unto the Praise of his Glory.** Now the earnest is part of the money agreed for, given in hand, as a token of the whole, to be paid in due time; a part of the promised inheritance, granted now, in token of full possession of the whole hereafter. But surely that kind of communication of the Spirit of God, which is of the nature of eternal glory, is the highest and most excellent kind of communication, something that is in its own nature spiritual, holy and divine, and far from anything that is common; and therefore high above anything of the nature of inspiration, or revelation of hidden facts by suggestion of the Spirit of God, which many natural men have had. What is the earnest and beginning of glory, but grace itself, especially in the more lively and clear exercises of it? It is not prophecy, nor tongues, nor knowledge, but that more excellent divine thing, **Charity that never faileth**, which is a prelibation and beginning of the light, sweetness, and blessedness of heaven, that world of love or charity. It is grace that is the seed of

glory, and dawning of glory in the heart, and therefore it is grace that is the earnest of the future inheritance. What is it that is the beginning or earnest of eternal life in the soul, but spiritual life? And what is that but grace? The inheritance that Christ has purchased for the elect, is the Spirit of God; not in any extraordinary gifts, but in his vital indwelling in the heart, exerting and communicating himself there, in his own proper, holy or divine nature: And this is the sum total of the inheritance that Christ purchased for the elect. For so are things constituted in the affair of our redemption, that the Father provides the Saviour, or Purchaser, and the purchase is made of Him; and the Son is the Purchaser and the Price; and the Holy Spirit is the great blessing or inheritance purchased, as is intimated **Galatians** 3:13, 14; and hence the Spirit is often spoken of as the sum of the blessings promised in the Gospel, **Luke** 24:49, **Acts** 1:4, and **Chapter** 2:38, 39, **Galatians** 3:14, **Ephesians** 1:13. This inheritance was the grand legacy which Christ left his disciples and church, in his last will and testament; **John** Chapter 14, and 15, and 16. This is the sum of the blessings of eternal life, which shall be given in heaven. (Compare **John** 7:37, 38, 39 and **John** 4:14 with **Revelation** 21:6 and 22:1, 17.) It is through the vital communications and indwelling of the Spirit, that the saints have all their light, life, holiness, beauty and joy in heaven: And it is through the vital communications and indwelling of the same Spirit, that the saints have all light, life, holiness, beauty and comfort on earth; but only communicated in less measure. And this vital indwelling of the Spirit in the saints, in this less measure and small beginning, is **the Earnest of the Spirit, the Earnest of the future Inheritance, and the first Fruits of the Spirit**, as the Apostle calls it, **Romans** 8:22, where, by **the**

first Fruits of the Spirit, the Apostle undoubtedly means the same vital gracious principle, that he speaks of in all the preceding part of the chapter, which he calls Spirit, and sets in opposition to flesh or corruption. Therefore this earnest of the Spirit, and first fruits of the Spirit, which has been shown to be the same with the seal of the Spirit, is the vital, gracious, sanctifying communication and influence of the Spirit, and not any immediate suggestion or revelation of facts by the Spirit.

And indeed the Apostle, when in that **Romans 8:16** he speaks of the Spirit's bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, does sufficiently explain himself, if his words were but attended to. What is here expressed, is connected with the two preceding verses, as resulting from what the Apostle had said there, as every reader may see. The three verses together are thus, **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 Spirit itself beareth Witness with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God.** Here, what the Apostle says, if we take it together, plainly shows, that what he has respect to, when he speaks of the Spirit's giving us witness or evidence that we are God's children; is his dwelling in us, and leading us, as a Spirit of Adoption, or spirit of a child, disposing us to behave towards God as to a Father. This is the witness or evidence the Apostle speaks of, that we **are Children**, that we **have the Spirit of Children**, or Spirit of Adoption. And what is that, but the spirit of love? There are two kinds of spirits the Apostle speaks of, the spirit of a slave, or **the Spirit of Bondage**, that is **Fear**; and the spirit of a child,

or **Spirit of Adoption**, and that is **Love**. The Apostle says, we have not received the Spirit of Bondage, or of slaves, which is a spirit of fear; but we have received the more ingenuous noble spirit of children, a spirit of love, which naturally disposes us to go to God, as children to a Father, and behave towards God as children. And this is the evidence or witness which the Spirit of God gives us that we are children. This is the plain sense of the Apostle: And so undoubtedly the Apostle here is speaking of the very same way of casting out doubting, and **Fear**, and the Spirit of Bondage, which the Apostle **John** speaks of, 1 **John** 4:18, **namely** By the prevailing of **Love**, that is the spirit of a child. The Spirit of Bondage works by fear, the slave fears the rod; but love cries **Abba Father**; it disposes us to go to God, and behave ourselves towards God as children; and it gives us clear evidence of our union to God as his children, and so casts out fear. So that it appears that the witness of the Spirit the Apostle speaks of, is far from being any whisper, or immediate suggestion or revelation; but that gracious holy effect of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, the disposition and temper of children, appearing in sweet child-like love to God, which casts out fear, or a spirit of a slave.

And the same Thing is evident from all the Context: It is plain the Apostle speaks of the Spirit, over and over again, as dwelling in the Hearts of the Saints, as a gracious Principle, set in Opposition to the Flesh or Corruption: And so he does in the Words that immediately introduce this Passage we are upon, Verse thirteen. **For if you live after the Flesh, you shall die; but if you, through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Flesh, you shall live.**

Indeed it is past Doubt with me, that the Apostle has a more special Respect to the Spirit of Grace, or the Spirit of Love, or Spirit of a Child, in its more lively Actings: For it is **perfect Love**, or **strong Love** only, which so witnesses or evidences that we are Children, as to cast out Fear, and wholly deliver from the Spirit of Bondage. The strong and lively Exercises of a Spirit of child-like, evangelical, humble Love to God, give clear Evidence of the Soul's Relation to God, as his Child; which does very greatly and directly satisfy the Soul. And though it be far from being true, that the Soul in this Case, judges only by an immediate Witness, without any Sign or Evidence; for it judges and is assured by the greatest Sign and clearest Evidence; yet in this Case, the Saint stands in no need of multiplied Signs, or any long Reasoning upon them. And though the Sight of his **relative Union** with God, and his being in his Favour, is not without a Medium, because he sees it by that Medium, **namely** his Love; yet his Sight of the **Union of his Heart** to God is immediate: Love, the Bond of Union, is seen intuitively: The Saint sees and feels plainly the Union between his Soul and God; it is so strong and lively, that he cannot doubt of it. And hence he is assured that he is a Child. How can he doubt whether he stands in a child-like Relation to God, when he plainly sees a child-like Union between God and his Soul, and hence does boldly, and as it were, naturally and necessarily cry, **Abba Father?**

And whereas the Apostle says, the Spirit bears Witness **with our Spirits**; by **our Spirit** here, is meant our Conscience, which is called the Spirit of Man; Proverbs twenty verse twenty-seven. **The Spirit of Man is the Candle of the Lord, searching all the inward Parts of the Belly.** We elsewhere read of the Witness of this Spirit of ours; Second Corinthians one verse twelve.

For our Rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience. And First John three nineteen, twenty, twenty-one. **And hereby do we know that we are of the Truth, and shall assure our Hearts before him. For if our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things. Beloved if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.** When the Apostle **Paul** speaks of the Spirit of God bearing Witness with our Spirit, he is not to be understood of two Spirits, that are two separate, collateral, independent Witnesses; but it is by one, that we receive the Witness of the other: The Spirit of God gives the Evidence, by infusing and shedding abroad the Love of God, the Spirit of a Child, in the Heart, and our Spirit, or our Conscience, receives and declares this Evidence for our Rejoicing.

Many have been the Mischiefs that have arisen from that false and delusive Notion of the Witness of the Spirit, that it is a Kind of inward Voice, Suggestion, or Declaration from God to a Man, that he is beloved of him, and pardoned, elected, or the like, sometimes with, and sometimes without a Text of Scripture; and many have been the false, and vain, (though very high) Affections that have arisen from hence. And it is to be feared that Multitudes of Souls have been eternally undone by it. I have therefore insisted the longer on this Head.

But I proceed now to a second Characteristic of gracious Affections.

Two. The first objective Ground of gracious Affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable Nature of divine Things, as they are in themselves; and not any conceived Relation they bear to Self, or Self-Interest.

I say that the supremely excellent Nature of divine Things, is the **first**, or **primary and original** objective Foundation of the spiritual Affections of true Saints; for I do not suppose that all Relation which divine Things bear to themselves, and their own particular Interest, are wholly excluded from all Influence in their gracious Affections. For this may have, and indeed has, a secondary and consequential Influence in those Affections that are truly holy and spiritual; as I shall show how by and by.

It was before observed, that the Affection of Love is as it were the Fountain of all Affection; and particularly, that Christian Love is the Fountain of all gracious Affections: Now the divine Excellency and Glory of God, and Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the Works of God, and the Ways of God, **etcetera** is the primary Reason, why a true Saint loves these Things; and not any supposed Interest that he has in them, or any conceived Benefit that he has received from them, or shall receive from them, or any such imagined Relation which they bear to his Interest, that Self-Love can properly be said to be the first Foundation of his Love to these Things.

Some say that all Love arises from Self Love; and that it is impossible in the Nature of Things, for any Man to have any Love to God, or any other Being, but that Love to himself must be the Foundation of it. But I humbly suppose it is for Want of Consideration, that they say so. They argue, that whoever loves God, and so desires his Glory, or the Enjoyment of him, he desires these Things as his own Happiness; the Glory of God, and the beholding and enjoying his Perfections, are considered as Things **agreeable to him**, tending to make him happy; he places his Happiness in them, and desires them as Things, which (if they

were obtained) would be delightful to him, or would fill him with Delight and Joy, and so make him happy. And so, they say, it is from Self-love, or a Desire of his own Happiness, that he desires God should be glorified, and desires to behold and enjoy his glorious Perfections. But then they ought to consider a little further, and enquire how the Man came **to place his Happiness** in God's being glorified, and in contemplating and enjoying God's Perfections. There is no Doubt, but that after God's Glory, and the beholding his Perfections, are become so agreeable to him, that he places his highest Happiness in these Things, then he will desire them, as he desires his own Happiness. But how came these Things to be so agreeable to him, that he esteems it his highest Happiness to glorify God, **etcetera?** Is not this the Fruit of Love? A Man must first love God, or have his Heart united to him, before he will esteem God's Good his own, and before he will desire the glorifying and enjoying of God, as his Happiness. 'Tis not strong arguing, that because **after** a Man has his Heart united to God in Love, **as a Fruit of this**, he desires his Glory and Enjoyment as his own Happiness, that therefore a Desire of this Happiness of his own, must needs be the **Cause and Foundation** of his Love: Unless it be strong arguing, that because a Father begat a Son, that therefore his Son certainly begat him. If **after** a Man loves God, and has his Heart so united to him, as to look upon God as his chief Good, and on God's Good as his own, it will be a **Consequence and Fruit of this**, that even Self-love, or love to his own Happiness, will cause him to desire the glorifying and enjoying of God; it will not thence follow, that this very Exercise of Self-love, went **before** his Love to God, and that his Love to God was a **Consequence and Fruit of that**. Something else, entirely

distinct from Self-love might be the Cause of this, **namely** A Change made in the Views of his Mind, and Relish of his Heart; whereby he apprehends a Beauty, Glory, and supreme Good, in God's Nature, as it is in itself. This may be the Thing that first draws his Heart to him, and causes his Heart to be united to him, prior to all Considerations of his own Interest or Happiness, although after this, and as a Fruit of this, he necessarily seeks his Interest and Happiness in God.

There is such a Thing, as a Kind of Love or Affection, that a Man may have towards Persons or Things, which **does properly arise** from Self-love; a preconceived Relation to himself, or some Respect already manifested by another to him, or some Benefit already received or depended on, **is truly the first Foundation** of his Love, and what his Affection does wholly arise from; and is what precedes any Relish of, or Delight in the Nature and Qualities inherent in the Being beloved, as beautiful and amiable. When the first Thing that draws a Man's Benevolence to another, is the beholding those Qualifications and Properties in him, which appear to him lovely in themselves; and the Subject of them, on this Account, worthy of Esteem and Goodwill, Love arises in a very different Manner, than when it first arises from some Gift bestowed by another, or depended on from him, as a Judge loves and favours a Man that has bribed him; or from the Relation he supposes another has to him, as a Man who loves another because he looks upon him as his Child. When Love to another arises thus, it does truly and properly arise from Self-love.

That Kind of Affection to God or Jesus Christ, which does thus properly arise from Self-love, cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual Love; as appears from what has been said already: For Self-

love is a Principle entirely natural, and as much in the Hearts of Devils as Angels; and therefore surely nothing that is the mere Result of it, can be supernatural and divine, in the Manner before described. Christ plainly speaks of this Kind of Love, as what is nothing beyond the Love of wicked Men, Luke six verse thirty-two.

If you love them that love you, what thank have you? For Sinners also love those that love them. And the Devil himself knew that that Kind of Respect to God which was so mercenary, as to be only for Benefits received or depended on, (which is all one) is worthless in the Sight of God; otherwise he never would have made use of such a Slander before God, against **Job**, as in Job one verses nine and ten. **Does Job serve God for naught? Hast thou not made an Hedge about him, and about his House,** etcetera? Nor would God ever have implicitly allowed the Objection to have been good, in case the Accusation had been true, by allowing that that Matter should be tried, and that **Job** should be so dealt with, that it might appear in the Event, whether **Job's** Respect to God was thus mercenary or no, and by putting the Proof of the Sincerity and Goodness of his Respect, upon that Issue.

It is unreasonable to think otherwise, than that the first Foundation of a true Love to God, is that whereby he is in himself lovely, or worthy to be loved, or the supreme Loveliness of his Nature. This is certainly what makes him chiefly amiable. What chiefly makes a Man, or any Creature lovely, is his Excellency; and so what chiefly renders God lovely, and must undoubtedly be the chief Ground of true Love, is his Excellency. God's Nature, or the Divinity, is infinitely excellent; yea it is infinite Beauty, Brightness, and Glory itself. But how can that be **true Love** of this excellent and lovely Nature, which is not built on the Foundation of **its true**

Loveliness? How can that be true Love of Beauty and Brightness, which is not for Beauty and Brightness sake? How can that be a true Prizing of that which is in itself infinitely worthy and precious, which is not for the Sake of its Worthiness and Preciousness? This infinite Excellency of the divine Nature, as it is in itself, is the true Ground of all that is good in God in any Respect; but how can a Man truly and rightly love God, without loving him for that Excellency in him, which is the Foundation of all that is in any Manner of Respect good or desirable in him? They whose Affection to God is founded first on his Profitableness to them, their Affection begins at the wrong End; they regard God only for the utmost Limit of the Stream of divine Good, where it touches them, and reaches their Interest; and have no Respect to that infinite Glory of God's Nature, which is the original Good, and the true Fountain of all Good, the first Fountain of all Loveliness of every Kind, and so the first Foundation of all true Love.

A natural principle of self-love may be the foundation of great affections towards God and Christ, without seeing any thing of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. There is a certain gratitude that is a mere natural thing. Gratitude is one of the natural affections of the soul of man, as well as anger; and there is a gratitude that arises from self-love, very much in the same manner that anger does. Anger in men is an affection excited **against** another, or in opposition to another, for something in him that crosses self-love. Gratitude is an affection one has **towards** another, for loving him, or gratifying him, or for something in him that suits self-love. And there may be a kind of gratitude, without any true or proper love; as there may be anger without any proper hatred, as in parents towards their children, that they may be angry with, and yet at

the same time have a strong habitual love to them. This gratitude is the principle which is in exercise in wicked men, in that which Christ declares concerning them, in the sixth of **Luke**, where he says, **Sinners love those that love them**; and which he declares concerning even the **publicans**, who were some of the most carnal and profligate sort of men, Matthew 5:46. This is the very principle that is wrought upon by bribery, in unjust judges; and it is a principle that even the brute beasts do exercise. A dog will love his master that is kind to him. And we see in innumerable instances, that mere nature is sufficient to excite gratitude in men, or to affect their hearts with thankfulness to others for kindnesses received; and sometimes towards them, whom at the same time they have an habitual enmity against. Thus **Saul** was once and again greatly affected, and even dissolved with gratitude towards **David**, for sparing his life; and yet remained an habitual enemy to him. And as men, from mere nature, may be thus affected towards men; so they may towards God. There is nothing hinders, but that the same self-love may work after the same manner towards God, as towards men. And we have manifest instances of it in Scripture; as indeed the children of **Israel**, who sang God's praises at the Red Sea, **but soon forgot God's works**; and in **Naaman the Syrian**, who was greatly affected with the miraculous cure of his leprosy, so as to have his heart engaged thenceforward to worship the God that had healed him, and him only, excepting when it would expose him to be ruined in his temporal interest. So was **Nebuchadnezzar** greatly affected with God's goodness to him, in restoring him to his reason and kingdom, after his dwelling with the beasts.

Gratitude being thus a natural principle, it renders ingratitude so much the more vile and heinous; because it shows a dreadful prevalence of wickedness when it even overbears, and suppresses the better principles of human nature. As it is mentioned as an evidence of the high degree of the wickedness of many of the heathen, that they were **without natural affection**, Romans 2:31. But that the want of gratitude, or natural affection, are evidences of an high degree of **vice**, is no argument that all gratitude and natural affection, has the nature of **virtue**, or **saving-grace**.

Self-love, through the exercise of a mere natural gratitude, may be the foundation of a sort of love to God many ways. A kind of love may arise from a false notion of God, that men have been educated in, or have some way imbibed; as though he were only goodness and mercy, and no revenging justice; or as though the exercises of his goodness were necessary, and not free and sovereign; or as though his goodness were dependent on what is in them, and as it were constrained by them. Men on such grounds as these, may love a God of their own forming in their imaginations, when they are far from loving such a God as reigns in Heaven.

Again, self-love may be the foundation of an affection in men towards God, through a great insensibility of their state with regard to God, and for want of conviction of conscience to make them sensible how dreadfully they have provoked God to anger. They have no sense of the heinousness of sin, as against God, and of the infinite and terrible opposition of the holy nature of God against it. And so having formed in their minds such a God as suits them, and thinking God to be such an one as themselves, who favors and agrees with them, they may like him very well, and feel a sort of love to him, when they are far from loving the true God.

And men's affections may be much moved towards God, from self-love, by some remarkable outward benefits received from God; as it was with **Naaman**, **Nebuchadnezzar**, and the children of **Israel** at the **Red Sea**.

Again, a very high affection towards God, may, and often does arise in men, from an opinion of the favor and love of God to them, as the first foundation of their love to him. After awakenings and distress through fears of Hell, they may suddenly get a notion, through some impression on their imagination, or immediate suggestion, with or without texts of Scripture, or by some other means, that God loves them, and has forgiven their sins, and made them his children; and this is the first thing that causes their affections to flow towards God and Jesus Christ. And then after this, and upon this foundation, many things in God may appear lovely to them, and Christ may seem excellent. And if such persons are asked, whether God appears lovely and amiable in himself? They would perhaps readily answer, Yes; when indeed, if the matter be strictly examined, this good opinion of God was purchased and paid for before ever they afforded it, in the distinguishing and infinite benefits they imagined they received from God. And they allow God to be lovely in himself, no otherwise, than that he has forgiven them, and accepted them, and loves them above most in the world, and has engaged to improve all his infinite power and wisdom in preferring, dignifying and exalting them, and will do for them just as they would have him. When once they are firm in this apprehension, it is easy to own God and Christ to be lovely and glorious, and to admire and extol them. It is easy for them to own Christ to be a lovely person, and the best in the world, when they are first firm in it, that he, though Lord of the Universe, is capti-

vated with love to them, and has his heart swallowed up in them, and prizes them far beyond most of their neighbors, and loved them from eternity, and died for them, and will make them reign in eternal glory with him in Heaven. When this is the case with carnal men, their very lusts will make him seem lovely: Pride itself will prejudice them in favor of that which they call Christ. Selfish proud man naturally calls that lovely that greatly contributes to his interest, and gratifies his ambition.

And as this sort of persons begin, so they go on. Their affections are raised from time to time, primarily on this foundation of self-love and a conceit of God's love to them. Many have a false notion of communion with God, as though it were carried on by impulses, and whispers, and external representations, immediately made to their imagination. These things they often have; which they take to be manifestations of God's great love to them, and evidences of their high exaltation above others of mankind; and so their affections are often renewedly set a-going.

Whereas the exercises of true and holy love in the saints arise in another way. They do not first see that God loves them, and then see that he is lovely; but they first see that God is lovely, and that Christ is excellent and glorious, and their hearts are first captivated with this view, and the exercises of their love are accustomed from time to time to begin here, and to arise primarily from these views; and then, consequentially, they see God's love; and great favor to them. The saint's affections begin with God; and self-love has a hand in these affections consequentially, and secondarily only. On the contrary, those false affections begin with self, and an acknowledgement of an excellency in God, and an affectedness with it, is only consequential and dependent. In the true saint God

is the lowest foundation; the love of the excellency of his nature is the foundation of all the affections which come afterwards, wherein self-love is concerned as an handmaid. On the contrary, the hypocrite lays himself at the bottom of all, as the first foundation, and lays on God as the superstructure; and even his acknowledgement of God's glory itself, depends on his regard to his private interest.

Self-love may not only influence men, so as to cause them to be affected with God's kindness to them separately; but also with God's kindness to them, as parts of a community. As a natural principle of self-love, without any other principle, may be sufficient to make a man concerned for the interest of the nation to which he belongs. As for instance, in the present war, self-love may make natural men rejoice at the successes of our nation, and sorry for their disadvantages, they being concerned as members of the body. So the same natural principles may extend further, and even to the world of mankind, and might be affected with the benefits the inhabitants of the earth have, beyond those of the inhabitants of other planets; if we knew that such there were, and knew how it was with them. So this principle may cause men to be affected with the benefits that mankind have received beyond the fallen angels. And hence men, from this principle, may be much affected with the wonderful goodness of God to mankind, his great goodness in giving his Son to die for fallen man, and the marvelous love of Christ in suffering such great things for us, and with the great glory they hear God has provided in Heaven for us; looking on themselves as persons concerned and interested, as being some of

this species of creatures, so highly favored. The same principle of natural gratitude may influence men here, as in the case of personal benefits.

But these things that I have said do by no means imply that all gratitude to God is a mere natural thing, and that there is no such thing as a spiritual gratitude, which is a holy and divine affection. They imply no more, than that there is a gratitude which is merely natural, and that when persons have affections towards God only or primarily for benefits received, their affection is only the exercise of a natural gratitude. There is doubtless such a thing as a gracious gratitude, which does greatly differ from all that gratitude which natural men experience. It differs in the following respects:

1. True gratitude or thankfulness to God for his kindness to us, arises from a foundation laid before, of love to God for what he is in himself; whereas a natural gratitude has no such antecedent foundation. The gracious stirrings of grateful affection to God, for kindness received, always are from a stock of love already in the heart, established in the first place on other grounds, **namely**, God's own excellency; and hence the affections are disposed to flow out, on occasions of God's kindness. The saint having seen the glory of God, and his heart overcome by it, and captivated into a supreme love to him on that account, his heart hereby becomes tender, and easily affected with kindnesses received. If a man has no love to another, yet gratitude may be moved by some extraordinary kindness; as in **Saul** towards **David**. But this is not the same kind of thing, as a man's gratitude to a dear friend, that his heart was before possessed with a high esteem of, and love to; whose heart by this means became tender towards him, and more easily affected with gratitude, and affected in another manner. Self-love

is not excluded from a gracious gratitude; the saints love God for his kindness to them, Psalm 116:1. **I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication.** But something else is included; and another love prepares the way, and lays the foundation, for these grateful affections.

2. In a gracious Gratitude, Men are affected with the Attribute of God's Goodness and free Grace, not only as they are concerned in it, or as it affects their Interest, but as a Part of the Glory and Beauty of God's Nature. That wonderful and unparalleled Grace of God, which is manifested in the Work of Redemption, and shines forth in the Face of Jesus Christ, is infinitely glorious in itself, and appears so to the Angels; it is a great Part of the moral Perfection and Beauty of God's Nature: This would be glorious, whether it were exercised towards us or no; and the Saint who exercises a gracious Thankfulness for it, sees it to be so, and delights in it as such; though his Concern in it serves the more to engage his Mind, and raise the Attention and Affection; and Self-Love here assists as an Handmaid, being subservient to higher Principles, to lead forth the Mind to the View and Contemplation, and engage and fix the Attention, and heighten the Joy and Love: God's Kindness to them is a Glass that God sets before them, wherein to behold the Beauty of the Attribute of God's Goodness: The Exercises and Displays of this Attribute, by this Means, are brought near to them, and set right before them. So that in a holy Thankfulness to God, the Concern our Interest has in God's Goodness, is not the first Foundation of our being affected with it; that was laid in the Heart before, in that Stock of Love which was to God, for his Excellency in himself, that makes the Heart tender, and susceptible of such Impressions from his Goodness to us: Nor is our own Interest, of

the Benefits we have received, the only, or the chief objective Ground of the present Exercises of the Affection; but God's Goodness, as Part of the Beauty of his Nature; although the Manifestations of that lovely Attribute, set immediately before our Eyes, in the Exercises of it for us, be the special Occasion of the Mind's Attention to that Beauty, at that Time, and serves to fix the Attention, and heighten the Affection.

Some may perhaps be ready to object against the whole that has been said, that Text, 1 John 4:19. **We love him, because he first loved us**, as though this implied that God's Love to the true Saints were the **first Foundation** of their Love to him.

In answer to this I would observe, that the Apostle's Drift in these Words, is to magnify the Love of God to us from hence, that he loved us, while we had no Love to him; as will be manifest to any one who compares this Verse, and the two following, with the ninth, tenth and eleventh Verses. And that God loved us, when we had no Love to him, the Apostle proves by this Argument, that God's Love to the Elect, is the Ground of their Love to him. And that it is three Ways. 1. The Saints Love to God, is the Fruit of God's Love to them; as it is the Gift of that Love. God gave them a Spirit of Love to him, because he loved them from Eternity. And in this Respect God's Love to his Elect is the first Foundation of their Love to him, as it is the Foundation of their Regeneration, and the Whole of their Redemption. 2. The Exercises and Discoveries that God has made of his wonderful Love to sinful Men, by Jesus Christ, in the Work of Redemption, is one of the chief Manifestations, which God has made of the Glory of his moral Perfection, to both Angels and Men; and so is one main objective Ground of the Love of Both to God; in a good Consistence with

what was said before. 3. God's Love to a particular elect Person, discovered by his Conversion, is a great Manifestation of God's moral Perfection and Glory to him, and a proper Occasion of the Excitation of the Love of holy Gratitude, agreeable to what was before said. And that the Saints do in these Respects love God, because he first loved them, fully answers the Design of the Apostle's Argument in that Place. So that no good Argument can be drawn from hence, against a spiritual and gracious Love in the Saints, arising primarily from the Excellency of divine Things, as they are in themselves, and not from any conceived Relation they bear to their Interest.

And as it is with the Love of the Saints, so it is with their Joy, and spiritual Delight and Pleasure: the first Foundation of it, is not any Consideration or Conception of their Interest in divine Things; but it primarily consists in the sweet Entertainment their Minds have in the View or Contemplation of the divine and holy Beauty of these Things, as they are in themselves. And this is indeed the very main Difference between the Joy of the Hypocrite, and the Joy of the true Saint. The former rejoices in himself; Self is the first Foundation of his Joy: The latter rejoices in God. The Hypocrite has his Mind pleased and delighted, in the first Place, with his own Privilege, and the Happiness which he supposes he has attained, or shall attain. True Saints have their Minds, in the first Place, inexpressibly pleased and delighted with the sweet Ideas of the glorious and amiable Nature of the Things of God. And this is the Spring of all their Delights, and the Cream of all their Pleasures; it is the Joy of their Joy. This sweet and ravishing Entertainment, they have in the View of the beautiful and delightful Nature of divine Things, is the Foundation of the Joy that they have after-

wards, in the Consideration of their being theirs. But the Dependance of the Affections of Hypocrites is in a contrary Order: They first rejoice, and are elevated with it, that they are made so much of by God; and then on that Ground, he seems in a Sort, lovely to them.

The first Foundation of the Delight a true Saint has in God, is his own Perfection; and the first Foundation of the Delight he has in Christ, is his own Beauty; he appears in himself the Chief among Ten Thousand, and altogether lovely: the Way of Salvation by Christ, is a delightful Way to him, for the sweet and admirable Manifestations of the divine Perfections in it; the holy Doctrines of the Gospel, by which God is exalted and Man abased, Holiness honoured and promoted, and Sin greatly disgraced and discouraged, and free and sovereign Love manifested; are glorious Doctrines in his Eyes, and sweet to his Taste, prior to any Conception of his Interest in these Things. Indeed the Saints rejoice in their Interest in God, and that Christ is theirs; and so they have great Reason; But this is not the first Spring of their Joy: They first rejoice in God as glorious and excellent in himself, and then secondarily rejoice in it, that so glorious a God is theirs: They first have their Hearts filled with Sweetness, from the View of Christ's Excellency, and the Excellency of his Grace, and the Beauty of the Way of Salvation by him; and then they have a secondary Joy, in that so excellent a Saviour, and such excellent Grace is theirs. But that which is the true Saint's Superstructure, is the Hypocrite's Foundation. When they hear of the wonderful Things of the Gospel, of God's great Love in sending his Son, of Christ's dying Love to Sinners, and the great Things Christ has purchased, and promised to the Saints, and hear these Things lively and elo-

quently set forth; they may hear with a great deal of Pleasure, and be lifted up with what they hear: but if their Joy be examined, it will be found to have no other Foundation than this, that they look upon these Things as theirs, all this exalts them, they love to hear of the great Love of Christ so vastly distinguishing some from others; for Self-love, and even Pride itself, makes them affect great Distinction from others: No Wonder, in this confident Opinion of their own good Estate, that they feel well under such Doctrine, and are pleased in the highest Degree, in hearing how much God and Christ makes of them. So that their Joy is really a Joy in themselves, and not in God.

And because the Joy of Hypocrites is in themselves, hence it comes to pass, that in their Rejoicings and Elevations, they are wont to keep their Eye upon themselves; having received what they call spiritual Discoveries or Experiences, their Minds are taken up about them, admiring their own Experiences: And what they are principally taken and elevated with, is not the Glory of God, or Beauty of Christ, but the Beauty of their Experiences. They keep thinking with themselves, What a good Experience is this! What a great Discovery is this! What wonderful Things have I met with! And so they put their Experiences in the Place of Christ, and his Beauty and Fullness; and instead of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, they rejoice in their admirable Experiences: instead of feeding and feasting their Souls in the View of what is without them, **namely** the innate, sweet, refreshing Amiableness of the Things exhibited in the Gospel, their Eyes are off from these Things, or at least they view them as it were sideways; but the Object that fixes their Contemplation, is their Experience; and they are feeding their Souls, and feasting a selfish Principle with a View of their

Discoveries: They take more Comfort in their Discoveries than in Christ discovered, which is the true Notion of living upon Experiences and Frames; and not a using Experiences as the Signs, on which they rely for Evidence of their good Estate, which some call living on Experiences: Though it be very observable, that some of them who do so, are most notorious for living upon Experiences, according to the true Notion of it.

The Affections of Hypocrites are very often after this Manner, they are first, much affected with some Impression on their Imagination, or some Impulse, which they take to be an immediate Suggestion, or Testimony from God, of his Love and their Happiness, and high Privilege in some Respect, either with or without a Text of Scripture; they are mightily taken with this, as a great Discovery; and hence arise high Affections. And when their Affections are raised, then they view those high Affections, and call them great and wonderful Experiences; and they have a Notion that God is greatly pleased with those Affections; and this affects them more; and so they are affected with their Affections. And thus their Affections rise higher and higher, until they sometimes are perfectly swallowed up: And Self conceit, and a fierce Zeal rises withal; and all is built like a Castle in the Air, on no other Foundation but Imagination, Self-love and Pride.

And as the Thoughts of this Sort of Persons are, so is their Talk; for out of the Abundance of their Heart, their Mouth speaketh. As in their high Affections, they keep their Eye upon the Beauty of their Experiences, and Greatness of their Attainments; so they are great Talkers about themselves. The true Saint, when under great spiritual Affections, from the Fullness of his Heart, is ready to be speaking much of God, and his glorious Perfections

and Works, and of the Beauty and Amiableness of Christ, and the glorious Things of the Gospel; but Hypocrites, in their high Affections, talk more of the Discovery, than they do of the Thing discovered; they are full of Talk about the great Things they have met with, the wonderful Discoveries they have had, how sure they are of the Love of God to them, how safe their Condition is, and how they know they shall go to Heaven, **et cetera**.

A true Saint, when in the Enjoyment of true Discoveries of the sweet Glory of God and Christ, has his Mind too much captivated and engaged by what he views without himself, to stand at that Time to view himself, and his own Attainments: it would be a Diversion and Loss which he could not bear, to take his Eye off from the ravishing Object of his Contemplation, to survey his own Experience, and to spend Time in thinking with himself, what an high Attainment this is, and what a good Story they now have to tell others. Nor does the Pleasure and Sweetness of his Mind at that Time, chiefly arise from the Consideration of the Safety of his State, or any Thing he has in View of his own Qualifications, Experiences, or Circumstances; but from the divine and supreme Beauty of what is the Object of his direct View, without himself; which sweetly entertains, and strongly holds his Mind.

As the Love and Joy of Hypocrites, are all from the Source of Self-Love; so it is with their other Affections, their Sorrow for Sin, their Humiliation and Submission, their religious Desires and Zeal: Every Thing is as it were paid for beforehand, in God's highly gratifying their Self-love, and their Lusts, by making so much of them, and exalting them so highly, as Things are in their Imagination. It is easy for Nature, as corrupt as it is, under a Notion of being already some of the highest Favorites of Heaven,

and having a God who does so protect them and favor them in their Sins, to love this imaginary God that suits them so well, and to extol him, and submit to him, and to be fierce and zealous for him. The high Affections of many are all built on the Supposition of their being eminent Saints. If that Opinion which they have of themselves were taken away, if they thought they were some of the lower Form of Saints, (though they should yet suppose themselves to be real Saints) their high Affections would fall to the Ground. If they only saw a little of the Sinfulness and Vileness of their own Hearts, and their Deformity, in the midst of their best Duties and their best Affections, it would knock their Affections on the Head; because their Affections are built upon Self, therefore Self-knowledge would destroy them. But as to truly gracious Affections, they are built elsewhere: they have their Foundation out of Self, in God and Jesus Christ; and therefore a Discovery of themselves, of their own Deformity, and the Meanness of their Experiences, though it will purify their Affections, yet it will not destroy them, but in some Respects sweeten and heighten them.

3. Those Affections that are truly Holy, are primarily founded on the Loveliness of the moral Excellency of divine Things. Or, (to express it otherwise) a Love to divine Things for the Beauty and Sweetness of their moral Excellency, is the first Beginning and Spring of all holy Affections.

Here, for the sake of the more illiterate Reader, I will explain what I mean by the moral Excellency of divine Things.

And it may be observed that the Word Moral is not to be understood here, according to the common and vulgar Acceptation of the Word, when Men speak of **Morality**, and a **moral** Behavior meaning an outward Conformity to the Duties of the moral Law,

and especially the Duties of the second Table; or intending no more at farthest, than such seeming Virtues, as proceed from natural Principles, in Opposition to those Virtues that are more inward, spiritual, and divine; as the Honesty, Justice, Generosity, Good Nature, and public Spirit of many of the Heathen, are called **moral** Virtues, in Distinction from the holy Faith, Love, Humility, and Heavenly-mindedness of true Christians: I say the Word Moral is not to be understood thus in this Place.

But in order to a right understanding what is meant, it must be observed, that Divines commonly make a Distinction between **moral** Good and Evil, and **natural** Good and Evil. By **moral** Evil, they mean the Evil of Sin, or that Evil which is against Duty, and contrary to what is right and ought to be. By **natural** Evil, they do not mean that Evil which is properly opposed to Duty; but that which is contrary to mere Nature, without any Respect to a Rule of Duty. So the Evil of suffering is called natural Evil, such as Pain, and Torment, Disgrace, and the like: These Things are contrary to mere Nature, contrary to the Nature of both Bad and Good, hateful to wicked Men and Devils, as well as good Men and Angels. So likewise natural Defects are called natural Evils, as if a Child be monstrous, or a natural Fool; these are natural Evils, but are not moral Evils, because they have not properly the Nature of the Evil of Sin. On the other Hand, as by moral Evil, Divines mean the Evil of Sin, or that which is contrary to what is right; so by **moral** Good, they mean that which is contrary to Sin, or that Good in Beings who have Will and Choice, whereby, as voluntary Agents, they are, and act, as it becomes them to be and to act, or so as is most fit, and suitable, and lovely. By **natural** Good they mean that Good that is entirely of a different Kind from Holiness

or Virtue, **namely** That which perfects or suits Nature, considering Nature abstractly from any holy or unholy Qualifications, and without any Relation to any Rule or Measure of Right and Wrong.

Thus Pleasure is a natural Good; so is Honor; so is Strength; so is speculative Knowledge, human Learning, and Policy. Thus there is a Distinction to be made between the natural Good that Men are possessed of, and their moral Good; and also between the natural and moral Good of the Angels in Heaven: the great Capacity of their Understandings, and their great Strength, and the honorable Circumstances they are in as the great Ministers of God's Kingdom, whence they are called Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, and Powers, is the natural Good which they are possessed of; but their perfect and glorious Holiness and Goodness, their pure and flaming Love to God, and to the Saints, and one another, is their moral Good. So Divines make a Distinction between the natural and moral Perfections of God: **By** the **moral** Perfections of God, they mean those Attributes which God exercises as a moral Agent, or whereby the Heart and Will of God are good, right, and infinitely becoming, and lovely; such as his Righteousness, Truth, Faithfulness, and Goodness; or, in one Word, his Holiness. By God's **natural** Attributes or Perfections, they mean those Attributes, wherein, according to our Way of conceiving of God, consists, not the Holiness or moral Goodness of God, but his Greatness; such as his Power, his Knowledge whereby he knows all Things, and his being eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, his Omnipresence, and his awful and terrible Majesty.

The moral Excellency of an intelligent voluntary Being, is more immediately seated in the Heart or Will of moral Agents. That intelligent Being whose Will is truly right and lovely, he is morally

good or excellent.

This moral Excellency of an intelligent Being, when it is true and real, and not only external, or merely Seeming and Counterfeit, is **Holiness**. Therefore **Holiness** comprehends all the true moral Excellency of intelligent Beings: There is no other **true Virtue**, but **real Holiness**. Holiness comprehends all the true Virtue of a good Man, his Love to God, his gracious Love to Men, his Justice, his Charity, and Bowels of Mercies, his gracious Meekness and Gentleness, and all other true Christian Virtues that he has, belong to his Holiness. So the Holiness of God in the more extensive Sense of the Word, and the Sense in which the Word is commonly, if not universally used in Scripture, is the same with the moral Excellency of the divine Nature, or his Purity and Beauty as a moral Agent, comprehending all his moral Perfections, his Righteousness, Faithfulness and Goodness. As in holy Men their Charity, Christian Kindness and Mercy, belongs to their Holiness; so the Kindness and Mercy of God, belongs to his Holiness. Holiness in Man, is but the image of God's Holiness: There are not more Virtues belonging to the Image, than are in the Original: Derived Holiness has not more in it, than is in that underived Holiness, which is its Fountain: There is no more than Grace for Grace, or Grace in the Image, answerable to Grace in the Original.

As there are two Kinds of Attributes in God, according to our Way of conceiving of him, his moral Attributes, which are summed up in his **Holiness**, and his natural Attributes, of Strength, Knowledge, **etcetera** that constitute the **Greatness** of God; so there is a twofold Image of God in Man, his **moral** or **spiritual** Image, which is his Holiness, that is the Image of God's moral Excellency; (which Image was lost by the Fall) and God's **natural**

Image, consisting in Men's Reason and Understanding, his natural Ability, and Dominion over the Creatures, which is the Image of God's natural Attributes.

From what has been said, it may easily be understood what I intend, when I say that a Love to divine Things for the Beauty of their **moral Excellency**, is the Beginning and Spring of all holy Affections. It has been already shown, under the former Head, that the first objective Ground of all holy Affections is the supreme Excellency of divine Things as they are in themselves, or in their own Nature; I now proceed further, and say more particularly, that that Kind of Excellency of the Nature of divine Things, which is the first objective Ground of all holy Affections, is their moral Excellency, or their Holiness. **Holy Persons**, in the Exercise of **holy Affections**, do love divine Things primarily for their **Holiness**: They love God, in the first Place, for the Beauty of his Holiness or moral Perfection, as being supremely amiable in itself. Not that the Saints, in the Exercise of gracious Affections, do love God only for his Holiness; all his Attributes are amiable and glorious in their Eyes, they delight in every divine Perfection; the Contemplation of the infinite Greatness, Power, and Knowledge, and terrible Majesty of God, is pleasant to them. But their Love to God for his Holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their Love. Here it is that true Love to God begins: All other holy Love to divine Things flows from hence: This is the most essential and distinguishing Thing that belongs to a holy Love to God, with Regard to the Foundation of it. A Love to God for the Beauty of his moral Attributes, leads to, and necessarily causes a Delight in God for all his Attributes; for his moral Attributes cannot be without his

natural Attributes: For infinite Holiness supposes infinite Wisdom, and an infinite Capacity and Greatness; and all the Attributes of God do as it were imply one another.

The true Beauty and Loveliness of all intelligent Beings does primarily and most essentially consist in their moral Excellency or Holiness. Herein consists the Loveliness of the Angels, without which, with all their natural Perfections, their Strength, and their Knowledge, they would have no more Loveliness than Devils. It is moral Excellency alone, that is in itself, and on its own Account, the Excellency of intelligent Beings: It is this that gives Beauty to, or rather is the Beauty of their natural Perfections and Qualifications. Moral Excellency is the Excellency of natural Excellencies. Natural Qualifications are either excellent or otherwise, according as they are joined with moral Excellency or not. Strength and Knowledge do not render any Being lovely, without Holiness; but more hateful: Though they render them more lovely, when joined with Holiness. Thus the elect Angels are the more glorious for their Strength and Knowledge, because these natural Perfections of theirs, are sanctified by their moral Perfection. But though the Devils are very strong, and of great natural Understanding, they are not the more lovely: They are more terrible indeed, but not the more amiable; but on the contrary, the more hateful. The Holiness of an intelligent Creature, is the Beauty of all his natural Perfections. And so it is in God, according to our Way of conceiving of the divine Being: Holiness is in a peculiar Manner the Beauty of the divine Nature. Hence we often read of the Beauty of Holiness; **Psalms** 29:2, **Psalms** 96:9, and 110:3. This renders all his other Attributes glorious and lovely. It is the Glory of God's Wisdom, that it is a holy Wisdom, and not a wicked

Subtlety and Craftiness. This makes his Majesty lovely, and not merely dreadful and horrible, that it is a holy Majesty. It is the Glory of God's Immutability, that it is a holy Immutability, and not an inflexible Obstinacy in Wickedness.

And therefore it must needs be, that a Sight of God's Loveliness must begin here. A true Love to God must begin with a Delight in his Holiness, and not with a Delight in any other Attribute; for no other Attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as (according to our Way of conceiving of God) it derives its Loveliness from this; and therefore it is impossible that other Attributes should appear lovely, in their true Loveliness, until this is seen; and it is impossible that any Perfection of the divine Nature should be loved with true Love, until this is loved. If the true Loveliness of all God's Perfections, arises from the Loveliness of his Holiness; then the true Love of all his Perfections, arises from the Love of his Holiness. They that do not see the Glory of God's Holiness, cannot see any Thing of the true Glory of his Mercy and Grace: They see nothing of the Glory of those Attributes, as any Excellency of God's Nature, as it is in itself; though they may be affected with them, and love them, as they concern their Interest: For these Attributes are no Part of the Excellency of God's Nature, as that is excellent in itself, any otherwise than as they are included in his Holiness, more largely taken; or as they are a Part of his moral Perfection.

As the Beauty of the divine Nature does primarily consist in God's Holiness, so does the Beauty of all divine Things. Herein consists the Beauty of the Saints, that they are Saints, or holy Ones: It is the moral Image of God in them, which is their Beauty; and which is their Holiness. Herein consists the Beauty and

Brightness of the Angels of Heaven, that they are holy Angels, and so not Devils; **Daniel** 4:13, 17, 23; **Matthew** 25:31; **Mark** 8:38; **Acts** 10:22; **Revelation** 14:10. Herein consists the Beauty of the Christian Religion, above all other Religions, that it is so holy a Religion. Herein consists the Excellency of the Word of God, that it is so holy; Psalm 119:140. **Thy Word is very pure, therefore thy Servant loveth it.** Verse 128. **I esteem all thy Precepts, concerning all Things, to be right; and I hate every false Way.** Verse 138. **Thy Testimonies, that thou hast commanded, are righteous, and very faithful.** And 172. **My Tongue shall speak of thy Word; for all thy Commandments are Righteousness.** And Psalm 19:7, 8, 9, 10. **The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul: The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple: The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart: The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the Eyes: The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: The Judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether: More to be desired are they than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold; sweeter also than Honey, and the Honeycomb.** Herein does primarily consist the Amiableness and Beauty of the Lord Jesus, whereby he is the chief among ten Thousands and altogether lovely; even in that he is **the holy One of God**, Acts 3:14 and **God's holy Child**, Acts 4:27 and **he that is Holy, and he that is True**, Revelation 3:7. All the spiritual Beauty of his human Nature, consisting in his Meekness, Lowliness, Patience, Heavenliness, Love to God, Love to Men, Condescension to the Mean and Vile, and Compassion to the Miserable, et cetera, all is summed up in his Holiness. And the

Beauty of his divine Nature, of which the Beauty of his human Nature is the Image and Reflection, does also primarily consist in his Holiness. Herein primarily consists the Glory of the Gospel, that it is a holy Gospel, and so bright an Emanation of the holy Beauty of God and Jesus Christ: Herein consists the spiritual Beauty of its Doctrines, that they are holy Doctrines, or Doctrines according to Godliness. And herein does consist the spiritual Beauty of the Way of Salvation by Jesus Christ, that it is so holy a Way. And herein chiefly consists the Glory of Heaven, that it is the **holy City, the holy Jerusalem, the Habitation of God's Holiness, and so of his Glory**; Isaiah 63:15. All the Beauties of the new **Jerusalem**, as it is described in the two last Chapters of Revelation, are but various Representations of this: See Chapter 21:2, 10, 11, 18, 21, 27; Chapter 22:1, 3.

And therefore it is primarily on Account of this Kind of Excellency, that the Saints do love all these Things. Thus they love the Word of God, **because it is very pure**. It is on this Account they love the Saints; and on this Account chiefly it is, that Heaven is lovely to them, and those holy Tabernacles of God amiable in their Eyes: It is on this Account that they love God; and on this Account primarily it is, that they love Christ, and that their Hearts delight in the Doctrines of the Gospel, and sweetly acquiesce in the Way of Salvation therein revealed.

Under the Head of the first distinguishing Characteristic of gracious Affection, I observed that there is given to those that are regenerated, a new supernatural Sense, that is as it were a certain divine spiritual Taste, which is in its whole Nature diverse from any former Kinds of Sensation of the Mind, as Tasting is diverse from any of the other five Senses, and that something is perceived

by a true Saint in the Exercise of this new Sense of Mind, in spiritual and divine Things, as entirely different from any Thing that is perceived in them by natural Men, as the sweet Taste or Honey is diverse from the Ideas Men get of Honey by looking on it or feeling of it; now this that I have been speaking, **namely** The Beauty of Holiness is that Thing in spiritual and divine Things, which is perceived by this spiritual Sense, that is so diverse from all that natural Men perceive in them: This Kind of Beauty is the Quality that is the immediate Object of this spiritual Sense: This is the Sweetness that is the proper Object of this spiritual Taste. The Scripture often represents the Beauty and Sweetness of Holiness as the grand Object of a spiritual Taste, and spiritual Appetite. This was the sweet Food of the holy Soul of Jesus Christ, John 4:32, 34. **I have Meat to eat, that ye know not of;—My Meat is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his Work.** I know of no Part of the holy Scriptures, where the Nature and Evidences of true and sincere Godliness, are so much of set Purpose, and so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm; the Psalmist declares his Design in the first Verses of the Psalm, and he keeps his Eye on this Design all along, and pursues it to the End: But in this Psalm the Excellency of Holiness is represented as the immediate Object of a spiritual Taste, Relish, Appetite and Delight, **God's Law**, that grand Expression and Emanation of the Holiness of God's Nature, and Prescription of Holiness to the Creature, is all along represented as the Food and Entertainment, and as the great Object of the Love, the Appetite, the Compliance and Rejoicing of the gracious Nature, which prizes God's Commandments **above Gold, yea, the finest Gold**, and to which they are **sweeter than the Honey, and**

Honeycomb; and that upon Account of their Holiness, as I observed before. The same Psalmist declares, that this is the Sweetness that a spiritual Taste relishes in God's Law, Psalm 19:8, 9, 10. **The Law of the Lord is perfect:—The Commandment of the Lord is pure: The Fear of the Lord is clean: The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart:—The Judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether: More to be desired are they than Gold, yea than much fine Gold; sweeter also than Honey and the Honeycomb.**

A holy Love has a holy Object: The Holiness of Love consists especially in this that it is the Love of that which is holy, as holy, or for its Holiness; so that it is the Holiness of the Object, which is the Quality whereon it fixes and terminates. An holy Nature must needs love that in holy Things chiefly, which is most agreeable to itself; but surely that in divine Things, which above all others is agreeable to holy Nature, is Holiness; because Holiness must be above all other Things agreeable to Holiness; for nothing can be more agreeable to any Nature than itself; holy Nature must be above all Things agreeable to holy Nature: And so the holy Nature of God and Christ, and the Word of God, and other divine Things, must be above all other Things, agreeable to the holy Nature that is in the Saints.

And again, an holy Nature doubtless loves holy Things, especially on the Account of that, for which sinful Nature has Enmity against them: But that for which chiefly sinful Nature is at Enmity against holy Things, is their Holiness; it is for this, that the carnal Mind is Enmity against God, and against the Law of God, and the People of God. Now it is just arguing from Contraries; from con-

trary Causes, to contrary Effects; from opposite Natures, to opposite Tendencies. We know that Holiness is of a directly contrary Nature to Wickedness: As therefore it is the Nature of Wickedness chiefly to oppose and hate Holiness; so it must be the Nature of Holiness chiefly to tend to, and delight in Holiness.

The holy Nature in the Saints and Angels in Heaven (where the true Tendency of it best appears) is principally engaged by the Holiness of divine Things. This is the divine Beauty which chiefly engages the Attention, Admiration and Praise of the bright and burning **Seraphim**; Isaiah 6:3. **One cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole Earth is full of his Glory.** And Revelation 4:8. **They rest not Day and Night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.** So the glorified Saints, Chapter 15:4. **Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name, for thou only art Holy?**

And the Scriptures represent the Saints on Earth as adoring God primarily on this Account, and admiring and extolling all God's Attributes, either as deriving Loveliness from his Holiness, or as being a Part of it. Thus when they praise God for his Power, his Holiness is the Beauty that engages them; Psalm 98:1. **O sing unto the Lord a new Song, for he hath done marvellous Things; his right Hand and his HOLY Arm hath gotten him the Victory.** So when they praise him for his Justice and terrible Majesty; Psalm 99:2, 3. **The Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all People: Let them praise thy great and terrible Name, for it is HOLY.** Verse 5. **Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his Footstool, for he is HOLY.** Verse 8, 9. **Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou**

tookest Vengeance of their Inventions. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his holy Hill; for the Lord our God is HOLY. So when they praise God for his Mercy and Faithfulness; Psalm 97:11, 12. **Light is sown for the Righteous, and Gladness for the Upright in Heart. Rejoice in the Lord ye Righteous, and give Thanks at the Remembrance of his HOLINESS.** 1 Samuel 2:2. **There is none HOLY as the Lord; for there is none beside thee; neither is there any Rock like our God.**

By this therefore all may try their Affections, and particularly their Love and Joy. Various Kinds of Creatures show the Difference of their Natures, very much, in the different Things they relish as their proper Good, one delighting in that which another abhors. Such a Difference is there between true Saints, and natural Men: Natural Men have no Sense of the Goodness and Excellency of holy Things; at least for their Holiness; they have no Taste of that Kind of Good; and so may be said not to know that divine Good, or not to see it; it is wholly hid from them: But the Saints, by the mighty Power of God, have it discovered to them: They have that supernatural, most noble and divine Sense given them, by which they perceive it: And it is this that captivates their Hearts, and delights them above all Things; it is the most amiable and sweet Thing to the Heart of a true Saint, that is to be found in Heaven or Earth; that which above all others attracts and engages his Soul; and that wherein, above all Things, he places his Happiness, and which he lobs upon for Solace and Entertainment to his Mind, in this World, and full Satisfaction and Blessedness in another. By this you may examine your Love to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the Word of God, and your Joy in them, and also

your Love to the People of God, and your Desires after Heaven; whether they be from a supreme Delight in this Sort of Beauty, without being primarily moved from your imagined Interest in them, or Expectations from them. There are many high Affections, great seeming Love and rapturous Joys, which have nothing of this holy Relish belonging to them.

Particularly, By what has been said you may try your Discoveries of the Glory of God's Grace and Love, and your Affections arising from them. The Grace of God may appear lovely two Ways; either as **Bonum Utile**, a profitable Good to me, that which greatly serves my Interest, and so suits my Self-Love; or as **Bonum formosum**, a Beautiful Good in itself, and Part of the moral and spiritual Excellency of the divine Nature. In this latter Respect it is that the true Saints have their Hearts affected, and Love captivated by the free Grace of God in the first Place.

From the Things that have been said, it appears, that if Persons have a great Sense of the **natural** Perfections of God, and are greatly affected with them, or have any other Sight or Sense of God, than that which consists in, or implies a Sense of the Beauty of his **moral** Perfections, it is no certain Sign of Grace: As particularly, Men's having a great Sense of the **awful Greatness, and terrible Majesty of God**; for this is only God's natural Perfection, and what Men may see, and yet be entirely blind to the Beauty of his moral Perfection, and have nothing of that spiritual Taste which relishes this divine Sweetness.

It has been shown already, in what was said upon the first distinguishing Mark of gracious Affections, that that which is spiritual, is entirely different in its Nature, from all that it is possible any graceless Person should be the Subject of, while he continues

graceless. But it is possible that those who are wholly without Grace, should have a clear Sight, and very great and affecting Sense of God's Greatness, his mighty Power, and awful Majesty; for this is what the Devils have, though they have lost the spiritual Knowledge of God, consisting in a Sense of the Amiability of his moral Perfections; they are perfectly destitute of any Sense or Relish of that Kind of Beauty, yet they have a very great Knowledge of the natural Glory of God (if I may so speak) or his awful Greatness and Majesty; this they behold, and are affected with the Apprehensions of, and therefore tremble before him. This Glory of God all shall behold at the Day of Judgment; God will make all rational Beings to behold it to a great Degree indeed, Angels and Devils, Saints and Sinners: He will manifest his infinite Greatness, and awful Majesty to every One, in a most open, clear and convincing Manner, and in a Light that none can resist, when **he shall come in the Glory of his Father, and every Eye shall see him**; when they shall cry to the Mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the Face of him that sits upon the Throne, they are represented as seeing the Glory of God's Majesty, **Isaiah 2. 10, 19, 21.** God will make all his Enemies to behold this, and to live in a most clear and affecting View of it, in Hell, to all Eternity. God hath often declared his immutable Purpose to make all his Enemies to know him in this Respect, in so often annexing these Words to the Threatenings he denounces against them, **and they shall know that I am the Lord**; yea, he hath sworn that all Men shall see his Glory in this Respect; **Numbers 14. 21. As truly as I live, all the Earth shall be filled with the Glory of the Lord.** And this Kind of Manifestation of God is very often spoken of in Scripture, as made, or to be made, in the Sight of God's

Enemies in this World; **Exodus** 9. 16. and Chapter 14. 18. and 15. 16. **Psalms** 66. 3. and 46. 10. and other Places innumerable. This was a Manifestation which God made of himself in the Sight of that wicked Congregation at Mount **Sinai**; and deeply affecting them with it; so that all the People in the Camp trembled. Wicked Men and Devils will see, and have a great Sense of every Thing that appertains to the Glory of God, but only the Beauty of his moral Perfection. They will see his infinite Greatness and Majesty, his infinite Power, and will be fully convinced of his Omniscience, and his Eternity and Immutability; and they will see and know every Thing appertaining to his moral Attributes themselves, but only the Beauty and Amiableness of them: They will see and know that he is perfectly just and righteous and true; and that he is a holy God, of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, who cannot look on Iniquity, and they will see the wonderful Manifestations of his infinite Goodness and free Grace to the Saints; and there is nothing will be hid from their Eyes, but only the **Beauty** of these moral Attributes, and that Beauty of the other Attributes, which arises from it. And so natural Men in this World are capable of having a very affecting Sense of every Thing else that appertains to God, but this only. **Nebuchadnezzar** had a great and very affecting Sense of the infinite Greatness and awful Majesty of God, of his supreme and absolute Dominion, and mighty and irresistible Power, and of his Sovereignty, and that he, and all the Inhabitants of the Earth were nothing before him; and also had a great Conviction in his Conscience of his Justice, and an affecting Sense of his great Goodness; **Daniel** 4. 1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37. And the Sense that **Darius** had of God's Perfections, seems to be very much like his; **Daniel** 6. 25. etc. But the Saints and Angels do behold the Glory of God

consisting in the **Beauty of his Holiness**: And it is this Sight only, that will melt and humble the Hearts of Men, and wean them from the World, and draw them to God, and effectually change them. A Sight of the awful Greatness of God, may overpower Men's Strength, and be more than they can endure; but if the moral Beauty of God be hid, the Enmity of the Heart will remain in its full Strength, no Love will be enkindled, all will not be effectual to gain the Will, but that will remain inflexible; whereas the first Glimpse of the moral and spiritual Glory of God shining into the Heart, produces all these Effects, as it were with omnipotent Power, which nothing can withstand.

The Sense that natural Men may have of the awful Greatness of God may affect them various Ways; it may not only terrify them, but it may elevate them and raise their Joy and Praise, as their Circumstances may be. This will be the natural Effect of it, under the real or supposed Receipt of some extraordinary Mercy from God, by the Influence of mere Principles of Nature. It has been shown already, that the Receipt of Kindness may, by the Influence of natural Principles, affect the Heart with Gratitude and Praise to God; but if a Person, at the same Time that he receives remarkable Kindness from God, has a Sense of his infinite Greatness, and that he is but Nothing in Comparison of him, surely this will naturally raise his Gratitude and Praise the higher, for Kindness to one so much inferior. A Sense of God's Greatness had this Effect upon **Nebuchadnezzar**, under the Receipt of that extraordinary Favour of his Restoration, after he had been driven from Men, and had his dwelling with the Beasts: A Sense of God's exceeding Greatness raises his Gratitude very high; so that he does, in the most lofty Terms, extol and magnify God, and calls upon all the

World to do it with him: And much more, if a natural Man, at the same Time that he is greatly affected with God's infinite Greatness and Majesty, entertains a strong Conceit that this great God has made him his Child and special Favourite, and promised him eternal Glory in his highest Love; will this have a Tendency, according to the Course of Nature, to raise his Joy and Praise to a great Height.

Therefore, it is beyond Doubt, that too much Weight has been laid, by many Persons of late, on Discoveries of God's Greatness, awful Majesty, and natural Perfection, operating after this Manner, without any real View of the holy, lovely Majesty of God. And Experience does abundantly witness to what Reason and Scripture declare as to this Matter; there having been very many Persons, who have seemed to be overpowered with the Greatness and awful Majesty of God, and consequentially elevated in the Manner that has been spoken of, who have been very far from having Appearances of a Christian Spirit and Temper, in any Manner of Proportion, or Fruits in Practice in any wise agreeable; but their Discoveries have worked in a way contrary to the Operation of truly spiritual Discoveries.

Not that a Sense of God's Greatness and natural Attributes is not exceeding useful and necessary. For, as I observed before, this is implied in a Manifestation of the Beauty of God's Holiness. Though that be something beyond it, it supposes it, as the greater supposes the less. And though natural Men may have a Sense of the natural Perfections of God; yet undoubtedly this is more frequent and common with the Saints, than with natural Men; and Grace tends to enable Men to see these Things in a better Manner,

than natural Men do. And not only enables them to see God's natural Attributes, but that Beauty of those Attributes, which (according to our Way of conceiving of God) is derived from his Holiness.

4. Gracious Affections do arise from the Mind's being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine Things.

Holy Affections are not Heat without Light; but evermore arise from some Information of the Understanding, some spiritual Instruction that the Mind receives, some Light or actual Knowledge. The Child of God is graciously affected, because he sees and understands something more of divine Things than he did before, more of God or Christ and of the glorious Things exhibited in the Gospel; he has some clearer and better View than he had before, when he was not affected; Either he receives some Understanding of divine Things that is new to him; or has his former Knowledge renewed after the View was decayed; 1 John 4. 7. **Every one that loveth, knoweth God.** Philippians 1. 9. **I pray that your Love may abound more and more, in knowledge and in all Judgment.** Romans 10. 2. **They have a Zeal of God, but not according to Knowledge.** Colossians 3. 10. **The new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge.** Psalms 43. 3, 4. **O send out thy Light and thy Truth; let them lead me, let them bring me into thy holy Hill.** John 6. 45. **It is written in the Prophets, and they shall be all taught of God: Every Man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.** Knowledge is the Key that first opens the hard Heart and enlarges the Affections, and so opens the Way for Men into the Kingdom of Heaven; Luke 11. 52. **Ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge.**

Now there are many affections which do not arise from any light in the understanding. And when it is thus, it is a sure evidence that these affections are not spiritual, let them be ever so high. Indeed they have some new apprehensions which they had not before. Such is the nature of man, that it is impossible his mind should be affected, unless it be by something that he apprehends, or that his mind conceives of. But in many persons these apprehensions or conceptions that they have, where with they are affected, have nothing of the nature of knowledge or instruction in them. As for instance; when a person is affected with a lively idea, suddenly excited in his mind, of some shape, or very beautiful pleasant form of countenance, or some shining light, or other glorious outward appearance: Here is something apprehended or conceived by the mind; but there is nothing of the nature of instruction in it: persons become never the wiser by such things, or more knowing about God, or a Mediator between God and man, or the way of salvation by Christ, or any thing contained in any of the doctrines of the Gospel. Persons by these external ideas have no further acquaintance with God, as to any of the attributes or perfections of his natures; nor have they any further understanding of his word, or any of his ways or works. Truly spiritual and gracious affections are not raised after this manner: These arise from the enlightening of the understanding to understand the things that are taught of God and Christ, in a new manner, the coming to a new understanding of the excellent nature of God, and his wonderful perfections, some new view of Christ in his spiritual excellencies and fulness, or things opened to him in a new manner, that appertain to the way of salvation by Christ, whereby he now sees how it is, and understands those divine and spiritual doctrines

which once were foolishness to him. Such enlightenings of the understanding as these, are things entirely different in their nature, from strong ideas of shapes and colours, and outward brightness and glory, or sounds and voices. That all gracious affections do arise from some instruction or enlightening of the understanding, is therefore a further proof, that affections which arise from such impression on the imagination, are not gracious affections, besides the things observed before, which make this evident.

Hence also it appears, that affections arising from texts of Scripture coming to the mind are vain, when no instruction received in the understanding from those texts, or any thing taught in those texts, is the ground of the affection, but the manner of their coming to the mind. When Christ makes the Scripture a means of the heart's burning with gracious affection, 'tis **by opening the Scriptures to their understandings**; Luke 24:32. **Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?** It appears also that the affection which is occasioned by the coming of a text of Scripture must be vain, when the affection is founded on something that is supposed to be taught by it, which really is not contained in it, nor in any other Scripture; because such supposed instruction is not real instruction, but a mistake, and misapprehension of the mind. As for instance, when persons suppose that they are expressly taught by some Scripture coming to their minds, that they in particular are beloved of God, or that their sins are forgiven, that God is their Father, and the like: This is a mistake or misapprehension; for the Scripture no where reveals the individual persons who are beloved, expressly; but only by consequence, by revealing the qualifications of persons that are beloved

of God: And therefore this matter is not to be learned from Scripture any other way than by consequence, and from these qualifications: For things are not to be **learned from** the Scripture any other way than they are **taught in** the Scripture.

Affections really arise from ignorance, rather than instruction, in these instances which have been mentioned; as likewise in some others that might be mentioned. As some when they find themselves free of speech in prayer, they call it God's being with them; and this affects them more; and so their affections are set a going and increased: When they look not into the cause of this freedom of speech; which may arise many other ways besides God's spiritual presence. So some are much affected with some apt thoughts that come into their minds about the Scripture, and call it the Spirit of God teaching them. So they ascribe many of the workings of their own minds, which they have a high opinion of, and are pleased and taken with, to the special immediate influences of God's Spirit; and so are mightily affected with their privilege. And there are some instances of persons, in whom it seems manifest that the first ground of their affection is some bodily sensation. The animal spirits, by some cause, (and probably sometimes by the Devil) are suddenly and unaccountably put into a very agreeable motion, causing person to feel pleasantly in their bodies; the animal spirits are put into such a motion as is accustomed to be connected with the exhilaration of the mind: and the soul, by the laws of the union of soul and body, hence feels pleasure. The motion of the animal spirits does not first arise from any affection or apprehension of the mind whatsoever; but the very first thing that is felt, is an exhilaration of the animal spirits, and a pleasant external sensation, it may be in their breasts. Hence, through ignorance,

the person being surprised, begins to think, surely this is the Holy Ghost coming into him. And then the mind begins to be affected and raised: There is first great joy; and then many other affections, in a very tumultuous manner, putting all nature, both body and mind, into a mighty ruffle: For though, as I observed before, 'tis the soul only that is **the Seat of the Affections**; yet this hinders not but that bodily sensations, may in this manner, be **an Occasion of Affections** in the mind.

And if men's religious affections do truly arise from some instruction or light in the understanding; yet the affection is not gracious, unless the light which is the ground of it be spiritual. Affections may be excited by that understanding of things, which they obtain merely by human teaching, with the common improvement of the faculties of the mind. Men may be much affected by knowledge of things of religion that they obtain this way; as some philosophers have been mightily affected, and almost carried beyond themselves, by the discoveries they have made in mathematics and natural philosophy. So men may be much affected from common illuminations of the Spirit of God, in which God assists men's faculties to a greater degree of that kind of understanding of religious matters, which they have in some degree, by only the ordinary exercise and improvement of their own faculties. Such illuminations may much affect the mind; as in many whom we read of in Scripture, **that were once enlightened**: But these affections are not spiritual.

There is such a thing, if the Scriptures are of any use to teach us any thing, as a spiritual, supernatural understanding of divine things, that is peculiar to the saints, and which those who are not saints have nothing of. 'Tis certainly a kind of understanding, ap-

prehending or discerning or divine things, that natural men have nothing of, which the Apostle speaks of, 1 Corinthians 2:14. **But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** 'Tis certainly a kind of seeing or discerning spiritual things, peculiar to the saints, which is spoken of, 1 John 3:6. **Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.** 3 John 11. **He that doth evil hath not seen God.** And John 6:40. **This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.** Chapter 14:19. **The world seeth me no more; but ye see me.** Chapter 17:3. **This is eternal life, that that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.** Matthew 11:27. **No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.** John 12:45. **He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.** Psalm 9:10. **They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee.** Philippians 3:8. **I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.** Verse 10. **That I may know Him.** And innumerable other places there are, all over the Bible, which show the same. And that there is such a thing as an understanding of divine things, which in its nature and kind is wholly different from all knowledge that natural men have, is evident from this, that there is an understanding of divine things, which the Scripture calls spiritual understanding; Colossians 1:9. **We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will,**

in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding. It has been already shown, that that which is **spiritual**, in the ordinary use of the word in the New Testament, is entirely different in nature and kind, from all which natural men are, or can be the subjects of.

From hence it may be surely inferred, wherein spiritual understanding consists. For if there be in the saints a kind of apprehension or perception, which is in its nature, perfectly diverse from all that natural men have, or that it is possible they should have, till they have a new nature; it must consist in their having a certain kind of ideas or sensations of mind, which are simply diverse from all that is or can be in the minds of natural men. And that is the same thing as to say, that it consists in the sensations of a new spiritual sense, which the souls of natural men have not; as is evident by what has been before, once and again observed. But I have already shown what that new spiritual sense is, which the saints have given them in regeneration, and what is the object of it. I have shown that the immediate object of it is the supreme beauty and excellency of the nature of divine things, as they are in themselves. And this is agreeable to the Scripture: The Apostle very plainly teaches that the great thing discovered by spiritual light, and understood by spiritual knowledge, is the glory of divine things, 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4. **But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them:** together with Verse 6. **For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:** And Chapter

3:18 preceding, **But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.** And it must needs be so, for as has been before observed, the Scripture often teaches that all true religion summarily consists in the love of divine things. And therefore that kind of understanding or knowledge, which is the proper foundation of true religion, must be the knowledge of the **loveliness of divine things.** For doubtless, that knowledge which is the proper foundation of **love**, is the knowledge of **loveliness.** What that beauty or loveliness of divine things is, which is the proper and immediate object of a spiritual sense of mind, was showed under the last head insisted on, **namely**, That it is the beauty of their moral perfection. Therefore it is in the view or sense of this, that spiritual understanding does more immediately and primarily consist. And indeed it is plain it can be nothing else; for (as has been shown) there is nothing pertaining to divine things besides the beauty of their moral excellency, and those properties and qualities of divine things which this beauty is the foundation of, but what natural men and devils can see and know, and will know fully and clearly to all Eternity.

From what has been said, therefore, we come necessarily to this conclusion, concerning that wherein spiritual understanding consists; **namely**, That it consists in **a sense of the heart, of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, that depends upon, and flows from such a sense.**

Spiritual Understanding consists primarily in a **Sense of Heart of that spiritual Beauty**. I say, a **Sense of Heart**; for it is not Speculation merely that is concerned in this Kind of Understanding: Nor can there be a clear Distinction made between the two Faculties of Understanding and Will, as acting distinctly and separately, in this Matter. When the Mind is sensible of the sweet Beauty and Amiableness of a Thing, That implies a Sensibleness of Sweetness and Delight in the Presence of the Idea of it: And this Sensibleness of the Amiableness or Delightfulness of Beauty, carries in the very Nature of it, **the Sense of the Heart**; or an Effect and Impression the Soul is the Subject of, as a Substance possessed of Taste, Inclination and Will.

There is a Distinction to be made between a mere **rational Understanding**, wherein the Mind only beholds Things in the Exercise of a speculative Faculty; and **the Sense of the Heart**, wherein the Mind does not only **speculate** and **behold**, but [〈◇〉] and [〈◇〉]. That Sort of Knowledge, by which a Man has a sensible Perception of Amiableness and Loathsomeness, or of Sweetness and Nauseousness, is not just the same Sort of Knowledge with that, by which he knows what a Triangle is, and what a Square is. The one is mere speculative Knowledge; the other sensible Knowledge, in which more than the mere Intellect is concerned; the Heart is the proper Subject of it, or the Soul as a Being that not only Beholds, but has Inclination, and is pleased or displeased. And yet there is the Nature of Instruction in it; as he that has perceived the sweet Taste of Honey, knows much more about it, than he who has only looked upon and felt of it.

The Apostle seems to make a Distinction between mere speculative Knowledge of the Things of Religion, and spiritual Knowledge, in calling that **the Form of Knowledge, and of the Truth**; Romans 2:20. **Which hast the Form of Knowledge, and of the Truth in the Law.** The Letter is often represented by relishing, smelling, or tasting; 2 Corinthians 2:14. **Now Thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and maketh manifest the Savour of his Knowledge, in every Place.** Matthew 16:23. **Thou savourest [〈◇〉] the Things that be of God, [〈◇〉] Things that be of Men.** 1 Peter 2:2, 3. **As new born Babes, [〈...〉] Milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby; if so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.** Canticles 1:3. **Because of the Savour of thy good Ointments, thy Name is as Ointment poured forth; therefore do the Virgins love thee;** compared with 1 John 2:20. **But you have an Unction from the holy One, and you know all Things.**

Spiritual Understanding primarily consists in this **Sense, or Taste of the moral Beauty of divine Things**; so that no Knowledge can be called Spiritual, any further than it arises from this, and has this in it. But **secondarily**, it includes **all that Discerning and Knowledge of Things of Religion, which depends upon, and flows from such a Sense.**

When the true Beauty and Amiableness of the Holiness or true moral Good that is in divine Things, is discovered to the Soul, it as it were opens a new World to its View. This shows the Glory of all the Perfections of God, and of every Thing appertaining to the divine Being: For, as was observed before, the Beauty of all arises from God's moral Perfection. This shows the Glory of all God's

Works, both of Creation and Providence: For it is the special Glory of them, that God's Holiness, Righteousness, Faithfulness and Goodness are so manifested in them; and without these moral Perfections, there would be no Glory in that Power and Skill with which they are wrought. The glorifying of God's moral Perfections, is the special End of all the Works of God's Hands. By this Sense of the, moral Beauty of divine Things, is understood the Sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator: For it is only by the Discovery of the Beauty of the moral Perfection of Christ, that the Believer is let into the Knowledge of the Excellency of his Person, so as to know any Thing more of it than the Devils do: And it is only by the Knowledge of the Excellency of Christ's Person, that any know his Sufficiency as [〈◇〉] Mediator; for the latter depends upon, and arises from the [〈◇〉]. It is by seeing the Excellency of Christ's Person, that the Saints are made sensible of the Preciousness of his Blood, and its Sufficiency to atone for Sin: For therein consists the Preciousness of Christ's Blood, that it is the Blood of so excellent and amiable a Person. And on this depends the Meritoriousness of his Obedience, and Sufficiency and Prevalence of his Intercession. By this Sight of the moral Beauty of divine Things, is seen the Beauty of the Way of Salvation by Christ: For that consists in the Beauty of the moral Perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every Step of this Method of Salvation, from Beginning to End. By this is seen the Fitness and Suitableness of this Way: For this wholly consists in its Tendency to deliver us from Sin and Hell, and to bring us to the Happiness which consists in the Possession and Enjoyment of moral Good, in a Way sweetly agreeing with God's moral Perfections. And in the Way's being contrived so as to attain these Ends, consists the excellent Wisdom of that

Way. By this is seen the Excellency of the Word of God: Take away all the moral Beauty and Sweetness in the Word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead Letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless Thing. By this is seen the true Foundation of our Duty; the Worthiness of God to be so esteemed, honoured, loved, submitted to, and served, as he requires of us, and the Amiableness of the Duties themselves that are required of us. And by this is seen the true Evil of Sin: For he who sees the Beauty of Holiness, must necessarily see the Hatefulness of Sin, its Contrary. By this Men understand the true Glory of Heaven, which consists in the Beauty and Happiness that is in Holiness. By this is seen the Amiableness and Happiness of both Saints and Angels. He that sees the Beauty of Holiness, or true moral Good, sees the greatest and most important Thing in the World, which is the Fulness of all Things, without which all the World is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. Unless this is seen, nothing is seen, that is worth the Seeing: For there is no other true Excellency or Beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood, that is worthy of the Exercise of the noble Faculty of Understanding. This is the Beauty of the Godhead, and the Divinity of Divinity, (if I may so speak) the Good of the infinite Fountain of Good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite Evil: Without which, we ourselves had better never have been; and without which there had better have been no Being. He therefore in Effect knows nothing, that knows not this: His Knowledge is but the Shadow of Knowledge, or the Form of Knowledge, as the Apostle calls it. Well therefore may the Scripture represent those who are destitute of that spiritual Sense, by which is perceived the Beauty of Holiness, as totally blind, deaf and senseless, yea dead. And well may

Regeneration, in which this divine Sense is given to the Soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the blind Eyes, and raising the Dead, and bringing a Person into a new World. For if what has been said be considered, it will be manifest, that when a Person has this Sense and Knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before; though before he **knew** all Things **after the Flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more; and he is become a new Creature, old Things are past away, behold all Things are become new;** agreeable to 2 **Corinthians** 5:16, 17.

And besides the Things that have been already mentioned, there arises from this Sense of spiritual Beauty, all true experimental Knowledge of Religion; which is of itself, as it were a new World of Knowledge. He that sees not the Beauty of Holiness, knows not what one of the Graces of God's Spirit is; he is destitute of any Idea or Conception of all gracious Exercise of Soul, and all holy Comforts and Delights, and all Effects of the saving Influences of the Spirit of God on the Heart: And so is ignorant of the greatest Works of God, the most important and glorious Effects of his Power upon the Creature: And also is wholly ignorant of the Saints as Saints; he knows not what they are: And in Effect is ignorant of the whole spiritual World.

Things being thus, it plainly appears, that God's implanting that spiritual supernatural Sense which has been spoken of, makes a great Change in a Man. And were it not for the very imperfect Degree, in which this Sense is commonly given at first, or the small Degree of this glorious Light that first dawns upon the Soul; the Change made by this spiritual Opening of the Eyes in Conversion, would be much greater, and more remarkable, every Way than if a

Man, who had been born Blind, and with only the other four Senses, should continue so a long Time, and then at once should have the Sense of seeing imparted to him, in the midst of the clear Light of the Sun, discovering a World of visible Objects. For though Sight be more noble than any of the other external Senses; yet this spiritual Sense which has been spoken of, is infinitely more noble than that, or any other Principle of Discerning that a Man naturally has, and the Object of this Sense infinitely greater and more important.

This Sort of Understanding or Knowledge is that Knowledge of divine Things from whence all truly gracious Affections do proceed. By which therefore all Affections are to be tried. Those Affections that arise wholly from any other Kind of Knowledge, or do result from any other Kind of Apprehensions of Mind, are vain.

From what has been said may be learned wherein the most essential Difference lies between that Light or Understanding which is given by the common Influences of the Spirit of God, on the Hearts of natural Men, and that saving Instruction which is given to the Saints. The Latter primarily and most essentially lies in beholding the Beauty that is in divine Things; which is the only **true** moral Good, and which the Soul of fallen Man is by Nature totally blind to. The Former consists only in a further Understanding, through the Assistance of natural Principles, of those Things which Men may know, in some Measure, by the alone ordinary Exercise of their Faculties. And this Knowledge consists only in the Knowledge of those Things pertaining to Religion, which are **natural**. Thus for Instance, In those Awakenings and Convictions of Conscience, that natural Men are often subject to, the Spirit of God gives no Knowledge of the true **moral** Beauty which is in divine

Things; but only assists the Mind to a clearer Idea of the Guilt of Sin, or its Relation to a Punishment, and Connection with the **Evil of Suffering** (without any Sight of its true **moral** Evil, or Odiousness as Sin) and a clearer Idea of the **natural** Perfections of God, wherein consists, not his holy Beauty and Glory, but his awful and terrible Greatness. It is a clear Sight of this, that will fully awaken the Consciences of wicked Men at the Day of Judgment, **without any spiritual Light**. And it is a lesser Degree of the same, that awakens the Consciences of natural Men, **without spiritual Light**, in this World. The same Discoveries are in some Measure given in the Conscience of an awakened Sinner in this World, which will be given more fully in the Consciences of Sinners at the Day of Judgment. The same Kind of Sight or Apprehension of God, in a lesser Degree, makes awakened Sinners in this World, sensible of the dreadful Guilt of Sin; against so great and terrible a God, and sensible of its amazing Punishment, and fills them with fearful Apprehensions of divine Wrath; that will thoroughly convince all wicked Men, of the infinitely dreadful Nature and Guilt of Sin, and astonish them with Apprehensions of Wrath, when Christ shall come in the Glory of his Power and Majesty, and every Eye shall see him, and all the Kindreds of the Earth shall wail because of him. And in those common Illuminations, which are sometimes given to natural Men, exciting in them some Kind of religious Desire, Love and Joy, the Mind is only assisted to a clearer Apprehension of the **natural Good** that is in divine Things. Thus sometimes, under common Illuminations, Men are raised with the Ideas of the natural Good that is in Heaven; as its outward Glory, its Ease, its Honour and Advancement, a being there the Objects of the high Favour of God,

and the great Respect of Men and Angels, **et cetera**. So there are many Things exhibited in the Gospel, concerning God and Christ, and the Way of Salvation, that have a **natural** Good in them, which suits the natural Principle of Self-love. Thus in that great Goodness of God to Sinners, and the wonderful dying Love of Christ, there is a natural Good, which all Men love, as they love themselves; as well as a spiritual and holy Beauty, which is seen only by the Regenerate. Therefore there are many Things appertaining to the Word of God's Grace delivered in the Gospel, which may cause natural Men, when they hear it, **anon with Joy to receive it**. All that Love which natural Men have to God, and Christ, and Christian Virtues, and good Men, is not from any Sight of the Amiableness of the Holiness, or true **moral** Excellency of these Things; but only for the sake of the **natural** Good there is in them. All natural Men's Hatred of Sin, is as much from Principles of Nature, as Men's Hatred of a Tiger for his Rapaciousness, or their Aversion to a Serpent for his Poison and Hurtfulness: And all their Love of Christian Virtue, is from no higher Principle than their Love of a Man's good Nature, which appears amiable to natural Men; but no otherwise than Silver and Gold appears amiable in the Eyes of a Merchant, or than the Blackness of the Soil is beautiful in the Eyes of the Farmer.

From what has been said of the Nature of spiritual Understanding, it appears that spiritual Understanding does not consist in any new doctrinal Knowledge, or in having suggested to the Mind any new Proposition, not before read or heard of: For it is plain that this suggesting of new Propositions, is a Thing entirely diverse from giving the Mind a new Taste or Relish of Beauty and Sweetness. It is also evident that spiritual Knowledge does not

consist in any new doctrinal Explanation of any Part of the Scripture; for still, this is but doctrinal Knowledge, or the Knowledge of Propositions; the doctrinal explaining of any Part of Scripture, is only giving us to understand, what are the Propositions contained or taught in that Part of Scripture.

Hence it appears, that the **spiritual Understanding** of the Scripture, does not consist in opening to the Mind the mystical Meaning of the Scripture, in its Parables, Types and Allegories; for this is only a doctrinal Explication of the Scripture. He that explains what is meant by the stony Ground, and the Seed's springing up suddenly, and quickly withering away, only explains what Propositions or Doctrines are taught in it. So he that explains what is typified by **Jacob's** Ladder, and the Angels of God ascending and descending on it, or what was typified by **Joshua's** leading **Israel** through **Jordan**, only shows what Propositions are hid in these Passages. And many Men can explain these Types, who have no spiritual Knowledge. It is possible that a Man might know how to interpret all the Types, Parables, Enigmas, and Allegories in the Bible and not have one Beam of spiritual Light in his Mind; because he may not have the least Degree of that spiritual Sense of the holy Beauty of divine Things which has been spoken of, and may see nothing of this Kind of Glory in any Thing contained in any of these Mysteries, or any other Part of the Scripture. It is plain, by what the Apostle says, that a Man might understand all such Mysteries, and have no saving Grace: 1 Corinthians 13:2. **And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.** They therefore are very foolish, who are exalted in an Opinion of their own spiritual Attainments, from

Notions that come into their Minds, of the mythical Meaning of these and those Passages of Scripture, as though it was a spiritual Understanding of these Passages, immediately given them by the Spirit of God, and hence have their Affections highly raised: And what has been said shows the Vanity of such Affections.

From what has been said, it is also evident, that it is not spiritual Knowledge, for Persons to be informed of their Duty, by having it immediately suggested to their Minds, that such and such outward Actions or Deeds are the Will of God. If we suppose that it is truly God's Manner thus to signify his Will to his People, by immediate inward Suggestions, such Suggestions have nothing of the Nature of spiritual Light. Such Kind of Knowledge would only be one Kind of doctrinal Knowledge: A Proposition concerning the Will of God, is as properly a Doctrine of Religion, as a Proposition concerning the Nature of God, or a Work of God: And an having either of these Kinds of Propositions, or any other Proposition, declared to a Man, either by Speech, or inward Suggestion, differs vastly from an having the holy Beauty of divine Things manifested to the Soul, wherein spiritual Knowledge does most essentially consist. Thus there was no spiritual Light in **Balaam**; though he had the Will of God immediately suggested to him by the Spirit of God from Time to Time, concerning the Way that he should go, and what he should do and say.

It is manifest therefore, that a being led and directed in this Manner, is not that holy and spiritual **Leading of the Spirit of God**, which is peculiar to the Saints, and a distinguishing Mark of the Sons of God, spoken of Romans 8:14. **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God.** Galatians 5:18. **But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the Law.**

And if Persons have the Will of God concerning their Actions, suggested to them by some Text of Scripture, suddenly and extraordinarily brought to their Minds, which Text, as the Words lay in the Bible before they came to their Minds, related to the Action and Behaviour of some other Person, but they suppose, as God sent the Words to them, he intended something further by them, and meant such a particular Action of theirs; I say, if Persons should have the Will of God thus suggested to them with Texts of Scripture, it alters not the Case. The Suggestion being accompanied with an apt Text of Scripture, does not make the Suggestion to be of the Nature of spiritual Instruction. As for Instance, If a Person in **New-England**, on some Occasion, were at a Loss whether it was his Duty to go into some popish or heathenish Land, where he was like to be exposed to many Difficulties and Dangers, and should pray to God that he would show him the Way of his Duty; and after earnest Prayer, should have those Words which God spoke to **Jacob**, **Genesis** 46, suddenly and extraordinarily brought to his Mind, as if they were spoken to him; **Fear not to go down into Egypt; and I will go with thee; and I will also surely bring thee up again.** In which Words, though as they lay in the Bible before they came to his Mind, they related only to **Jacob**, and his Behaviour; yet he supposes that God has a further Meaning, as they were brought and applied to him; that thus they are to be understood in a new Sense, that by **Egypt** is to be understood this particular Country he has in his Mind, and that the Action intended is his going thither, and that the Meaning of the Promise is that God would bring him back into **New-England** again. There is nothing of the Nature of a spiritual or gracious Leading of the Spirit in this; for there is nothing of the Nature of

spiritual Understanding in it. Thus to understand Texts of Scripture, is not to have a spiritual Understanding of them. Spiritually to understand the Scripture, is rightly to understand what **is in** the Scripture, and what **was in** it before it was understood: It is to understand rightly, what **used to be contained in** the Meaning of it; and not the making of a new Meaning. When the Mind is enlightened spiritually and rightly to understand the Scripture, it is enabled to see That in the Scripture, which before was not seen, **by Reason of Blindness**. But if it was by Reason of Blindness; that is an Evidence that the same Meaning was in it before; otherwise it would have been no Blindness not to see it: It is no Blindness not to see a Meaning which is not there. Spiritually enlightening the Eyes to understand the Scripture, is **to open the Eyes**, Psalm 119:18. **Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law**; which argues that the Reason why the same was not seen in the Scripture before, was that the Eyes were **shut**; which would not be the Case, if the Meaning that is now understood was not there before, but is now newly added to the Scripture, by the Manner of the Scripture's coming to my Mind. This making a new Meaning to the Scripture, is the same Thing as making a new Scripture: It is properly adding to the Word; which is threatened with too dreadful a Curse. Spiritually to understand the Scripture, is to have the Eyes of the Mind opened, to behold the wonderful spiritual Excellency of the glorious Things contained in the true Meaning of it, and that always were contained in it, ever since it was written; to behold the amiable and bright Manifestation of the divine Perfections, and of the Excellency and Sufficiency of Christ, and the Excellency and Suitableness of the Way of Salvation by Christ, and the spiritual

Glory of the Precepts and Promises of the Scripture, **et cetera**. Which Things are, and always were in the Bible, and would have been seen before, if it had not been for Blindness, without having any new Sense added by the Words being sent by God to a particular Person, and spoken anew to him, with a new Meaning.

And as to a gracious **Leading of the Spirit**, it consists in two Things; partly in **instructing** a Person in his Duty by the Spirit, and partly in powerfully **inducing** him to comply with that Instruction. But so far as the gracious Leading of the Spirit lies in Instruction, it consists in a Person's being guided by a spiritual and distinguishing Taste of that which has in it true moral Beauty. I have shown that spiritual Knowledge primarily consists in a Taste or Relish of the Amiableness and Beauty of that which is truly good and holy: This holy Relish is a Thing that discerns and distinguishes between Good and Evil, between holy and unholy, without being at the Trouble of a Train of Reasoning. As he who has a true Relish of external Beauty, knows what is beautiful by looking upon it: He stands in no need of a Train of Reasoning about the Proportion of the Features, in order to determine whether that which he sees be a beautiful Countenance or no: He needs nothing, but only the Glance of his Eye. He who has a rectified musical Ear, knows whether the Sound he hears be true Harmony: He does not need first to be at the Trouble of the Reasonings of a Mathematician, about the Proportion of the Notes. He that has a rectified Palate, knows what is good Food, as soon as he tastes it, without the Reasoning of a Physician about it. There is a holy Beauty and Sweetness in Words and Actions, as well as a natural Beauty in Countenances and Sounds, and Sweetness in Food; Job 12:11. **Does not the Ear try Words, and the Mouth taste his**

Meat. When a holy and amiable Action is suggested to the Thoughts of a holy Soul; that Soul, if in the lively Exercise of its spiritual Taste, at once sees a Beauty in it, and so inclines to it, and closes with it. On the Contrary, if an unworthy unholy Action be suggested to it, its sanctified Eye sees no Beauty in it, and is not pleased with it; its sanctified Taste relishes no Sweetness in it, but on the contrary, it is nauseous to it. Yea its holy Taste and Appetite leads it to think of That which is truly lovely, and naturally suggests it; as a healthy Taste and Appetite naturally suggests the Idea of its proper Object. Thus a holy Person is led by the Spirit, as he is instructed and led by his holy Taste, and Disposition of Heart; whereby, in the lively Exercise of Grace, he easily distinguishes Good and Evil, and knows at once, what is a suitable amiable Behaviour towards God, and towards Man, in this Case and the other; and judges what is right as it were spontaneously, and of himself, without a particular Deduction, by any other Arguments than the Beauty that is seen, and Goodness that is tasted. Thus Christ blames the **Pharisees**, that they **did not, even of their own selves, judge what was right**, without needing Miracles to prove it, **Luke** 12:57. The Apostle seems plainly to have Respect to this Way of judging of spiritual Beauty, in Romans 12:2. **Be you transformed by the Renewing of your Mind, that you may prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable Will of God.**

There is such a Thing as **good Taste** of **natural** Beauty, (which learned Men often speak of) that is exercised about **temporal** Things, in judging of them; as about the Justness of a Speech, the Goodness of Style, the Beauty of a Poem, the Gracefulness of Deportment, **etc.** A late great Philosopher of our

Nation, writes thus upon it: To have a **Taste**, is to give Things their real Value, to be touched with the Good, to be shocked with the Ill; not to be dazzled with false Lustres, but in Spite of all Colours, and every Thing that might deceive or amuse, to judge soundly. **Taste** and **Judgment** then, should be the same Thing; and yet it is easy to discern a Difference. The **Judgment** forms its Opinions from Reflection: The Reason on this Occasion fetches a Kind of Circuit, to arrive at its End; it supposes Principles, it draws Consequences, and it judges; but not without a thorough Knowledge of the Case; so that after it has pronounced, it is ready to render a Reason of its Decrees. **Good Taste** observes none of these Formalities; before it has Time to consult, it has taken its Side; as soon as ever the Object is presented it, the Impression is made, the Sentiment formed, ask no more of it. As the Ear is wounded with a harsh Sound, as the Smell is soothed with an agreeable Odour, before ever the Reason have meddled with those Objects to judge of them, so the **Taste** opens itself at once, and prevents all Reflection. They may come afterwards to confirm it, and discover the secret Reasons of its Conduct; but it was not in its Power to wait for them. Frequently it happens not to know them at all, and what Pains soever it uses, cannot discover what it was determined it to think as it did. This Conduct is very different from That the **Judgment** observes in its Decisions: Unless we choose to say, that **good Taste** is as it were a first Motion, or a Kind of Instinct of right Reason, which hurries on with Rapidity, and conducts more securely, than all the Reasonings she could make: It is a first Glance of the Eye, which discovers to us the Nature and Relations of Things in a Moment.

Now as there is such a Kind of **Taste** of the Mind as this, which Philosophers speak of, whereby Persons are guided in their Judgment of the natural Beauty, Gracefulness, Propriety, Nobleness and Elegance of Speeches and Actions, whereby they judge as it were by the Glance of the Eye, or by inward Sensation, and the first Impression of the Object; so there is likewise such a Thing is a **divine Taste**, given and maintained by the Spirit of God, in the Hearts of the Saints, whereby they are in like Manner led and guided in discerning and distinguishing the true spiritual and holy Beauty of Actions; and that more easily, readily and accurately, as they have more or less of the Spirit of God dwelling in them. And thus **the Children of God are led by the Spirit of God, in their Behaviour in the World.**

A holy Disposition and spiritual Taste, where Grace is strong and lively, will enable a Soul to determine what Actions are right and becoming Christians, not only more speedily, but far more exactly, than the greatest Abilities without it. This may be illustrated by the Manner in which some Habits of Mind, and Dispositions of Heart, of a Nature inferior to true Grace, will teach and guide a Man in his Actions. As for Instance, if a Man be a very good natured Man, his good Nature will teach him better how to act benevolently amongst Mankind, and will direct him, on every Occasion, to these Speeches and Actions, which are agreeable to Rules of Goodness, than the strongest Reason will a Man of a morose Temper. So if a Man's Heart be under the Influence of an entire Friendship, and most endeared Affection to another; though he be a Man of an indifferent Capacity, yet this Habit of his Mind will direct him, for more readily and exactly, to a Speech and Deportment, or Manner of Behaviour, which shall in all Respects

be sweet and Kind, and agreeable to a benevolent Disposition of Heart, than the greatest Capacity without it. He has as it were a Spirit within him, that guides him: The Habit of his Mind is attended with a Taste, by which he immediately relishes that Air and Mien which is benevolent, and disrelishes the contrary, and causes him to distinguish between one and the other **in a Moment**, more precisely, than the most accurate Reasonings can find out **in many Hours**. As the Nature and inward Tendency of a Stone, or other heavy Body, that is let fall from a Loft, shows the Way to the Centre of the Earth, more exactly in an Instant, than the ablest Mathematician, without it, could determine, by his most accurate Observations, in a whole Day. Thus it is that a spiritual Disposition and Taste teaches and guides a Man in his Behaviour in the World. So an eminently humble, or meek, or charitable Disposition, will direct a Person of mean Capacity to such a Behaviour, as is agreeable to Christian Rules of Humility, Meekness and Charity, far more readily and precisely, than the most diligent Search, and elaborate Reasonings, of a Man of the strongest Faculties, who has not a Christian Spirit within him. So also will a Spirit of Love to God, and holy Fear and Reverence towards God, and filial Confidence in God, and an heavenly Disposition, teach and guide a Man in his Behaviour.

It is an exceeding difficult Thing for a wicked Man, destitute of divine Principles in his Heart, to guide him, to know how to demean himself like a Christian, with the Life, and Beauty, and heavenly Image of a truly holy, humble Soul. He knows not how to put on those Garments; neither do they fit him. Ecclesiastes 10:15. **It is Labour of the Fool, wearies every one of them; because he knows not how to go to the City.** Proverbs 10:32. **The**

Lips of the Righteous know what is acceptable. Chapter 15:2. **The Tongue of the Wise uses Knowledge aright; but the Mouth of Fools pours out Foolishness.** And Chapter 16:23. **The Heart of the Righteous teaches his Mouth, and adds Learning to his Lips.**

The Saints in thus judging of Actions by a spiritual Taste, have not a particular Recourse to the express Rules of God's Word, with Respect to every Word and Action that is before them, the Good or Evil of which they thus judge of: But yet their Taste itself in General, is Subject to the Rule of God's Word, and must be tried by that, and a right Reasoning upon it. As a Man of a rectified Palate judges of particular Meats by his Taste: But yet his Palate itself must be judged of, whether it be right or no, by certain Rules and Reasons. But a spiritual Taste of Soul, mightily helps the Soul, in its Reasonings on the Word of God, and in judging of the true Meaning of its Rules; as it removes the Prejudices of a depraved Appetite, and naturally leads the Thoughts in the right Channel, casts a Light on the Word of God, and causes the true Meaning, most naturally to come to Mind, through the Harmony there is between the Disposition and Relish of a sanctified Soul, and the true Meaning of the Rules of God's Word. Yea, this Harmony tends to bring the Texts themselves to Mind, on proper Occasions; as the particular State of the Stomach and Palate, tends to bring such particular Meats and Drinks to Mind, as are agreeable to that State. Thus **the Children of God are led by the Spirit of God** in judging of Actions themselves, and in their Meditations upon, and judging of, and applying the Rules of God's holy Word: And so

God **teaches them his Statutes, and causes them to understand the Way of his Precepts**; which the Psalmist so often prays for.

But this Leading of the Spirit is a Thing exceeding diverse from that which some call so; which consists not in teaching them God's Statutes and Precepts, that he has already given; but in giving them new Precepts, by immediate inward Speech or Suggestion; and has in it no Tasting the true Excellency of Things, or judging or discerning the Nature of Things at all. They do not determine what is the Will of God by any Taste or Relish, or any Manner of Judgment of the Nature of Things, but by an immediate Dictate concerning the Thing to be done: There is no such Thing as any Judgment or Wisdom in the Case. Whereas in that Leading of the Spirit which is peculiar to God's Children, is imparted that true Wisdom, and holy Discretion, so often spoken of in the Word of God; which is high above the other Way, as the Stars are higher than a Glowworm; and that which **Balaam** and **Saul** (who sometimes were led by the Spirit in that other Way) never had, and no natural Man can have, without a Change of Nature.

What has been said of the Nature of spiritual Understanding, as consisting most essentially in a divine supernatural Sense and Relish of the Heart, not only shows that there is nothing of it in this falsely supposed **Leading of the Spirit**, which has been now spoken of; but also shows the Difference between spiritual Understanding, and all Kinds and Forms of Enthusiasm, all imaginary Sights of God and Christ and Heaven, all supposed Witnessing of the Spirit, and Testimonies of the Love of God by immediate inward Suggestion; and all Impressions of future Events, and immediate Revelations of any secret Facts whatsoever;

all enthusiastical Impressions and Applications of Words of Scripture, as though they were Words now immediately spoken by God to a particular Person, in a new Meaning, and carrying something more in them, than the Words contain as they lie in the Bible; and all Interpretations of the mystical Meaning of the Scripture, by supposed immediate Revelation. None of these Things consist in a divine Sense and Relish of the **Heart**, of the holy Beauty and Excellency of divine Things; nor have they any Thing to do with such a Sense; but all consist in Impressions in the **Head**; all are to be referred to the Head of **Impressions on the Imagination**, and consist in the exciting external Ideas in the Mind, either in Ideas of outward Shapes and Colours, or Words spoken, or Letters written, or Ideas of Things external and sensible, belonging to Actions done, or Events accomplished, or to be Accomplished. An enthusiastical supposed Manifestation of the Love of God, is made by the exciting an Idea of a smiling Countenance, or some other pleasant outward Appearance, or by the Idea of pleasant Words spoken, or written, excited in the Imagination, or some pleasant bodily Sensation. So when Persons have an imaginary Revelation of some secret Fact, it is by exciting external Ideas; either of some Words, implying a Declaration of that Fact, or some visible or sensible Circumstances of such a Fact. So the supposed Leading of the Spirit, to do the Will of God, in outward Behaviour, is either by exciting the Idea of Words (which are outward Things) in their Minds, either the Words of Scripture, or other Words, which they look upon as an immediate Command of God; or else by exciting and impressing strongly the Ideas of the outward Actions themselves. So when an Interpretation of a Scripture Type or Allegory, is immediately, in an extraordinary

Way, strongly suggested, it is by suggesting Words, as though one secretly whispered, and told the Meaning; or by exciting other Ideas in the Imagination.

Such Sort of Experiences and Discoveries as these commonly raise the Affections of such as are deluded by them, to a great Height, and make a mighty Uproar in both Soul and Body. And a very great Part of the false Religion that has been in the World, from one Age to another, consists in such Discoveries as these, and in the Affections that flow from them. In such Things consisted the Experiences of the ancient **Pythagoreans** among the Heathen, and many others among them, who had strange Ecstasies and Raptures, and pretended to a divine **Afflatus**, and immediate Revelations from Heaven. In such Things as these seem to have consisted the Experiences of the **Essenes**, an ancient Sect among the **Jews**, at, and after the Times of the Apostles. In such Things as these consisted the Experiences of many of the ancient **Gnostics**, and the **Montanists**, and many other Sects of ancient Heretics, in the primitive Ages of the Christian Church. And in such Things as these consisted the pretended immediate Converse, with God and Christ, and Saints and Angels of Heaven, of the **Monks**, **Anchorites**, and **Recluses**, that formerly abounded in the Church of **Rome**. In such Things consisted the pretended high Experiences, and great Spirituality of many Sects of Enthusiasts, that swarmed in the World after the Reformation; such as the **Anabaptists**, **Antinomians**, and **Familists**, the Followers of **Nicholas Stork**, **Thomas Munzer**, **John Becold**, **Henry Pfeifer**, **David George**, **Casper Swenckfield**, **Henry Nicolas**, **Johannes Agricola Eislebius**; and the many wild Enthusiasts that were in **England** in the Days of **Oliver**

Cromwell; and the Followers of Mistress **Hutchinson**, in **New-England**; as appears by the particular and large Accounts given of all these Sects, by that eminently holy Man, Mister **Samuel Rutherford**, in his **Display of the spiritual Antichrist**. And in such Things as these consisted the Experiences of the late **French Prophets**, and their Followers. And in these Things seems to lie the Religion of the many Kinds of Enthusiasts of the present Day. It is by such Sort of Religion as this chiefly that **Satan** transforms himself into an Angel of Light: And it is that which he has ever most successfully made use of to confound hopeful and happy Revivals of Religion, from the Beginning of the christian Church to this Day. When the Spirit of God is poured out, to begin a glorious Work, then the old Serpent, as fast as possible, and by all Means introduces this Bastard Religion, and mingles it with the true; which has from Time to Time soon brought all Things into Confusion. The pernicious Consequence of it is not easily imagined or conceived of, until we see and are amazed with the awful Effects of it, and the dismal Desolation it has made. If the Revival of true Religion be very great in its Beginning, yet if this Bastard comes in, there is Danger of its doing as **Gideon's** Bastard **Abimelech** did, who never left until he had slain all his Threescore and ten true born Sons, excepting one, that was forced to flee. Great and strict therefore should be the Watch and Guard that Ministers maintain against such Things, especially at a Time of great Awakening: For Men, especially the common People, are easily bewitched with such Things; they having such a glaring and glistening Show of high Religion; and the Devil hiding his own Shape, and appearing as an Angel of Light, that Men may not be afraid of him, but many adore him.

The Imagination seems to be that wherein are formed all those Delusions of **Satan**, which those are carried away with, who are under the Influence of false Religion, and counterfeit Grace and Affections. Here is the Devil's grand Lurking-Place, the very Nest of foul and delusive Spirits. It is very much to be doubted whether the Devil can come at the Soul of Man, at all to affect it, or to excite any Thought or Motion, or produce any Effect whatsoever in it, any other Way, than by the Fantasy; which is that Power of the Soul, by which it receives, and is the Subject of the Species, or Ideas of outward and sensible Things. As to the Laws and Means which the Creator has established, for the Intercourse and Communication of unbodied Spirits, we know nothing about them; we don't know by what Medium they manifest their Thoughts to each other, or excite Thoughts in each other. But as to Spirits that are united to Bodies, those Bodies God has united them to, are their Medium of Communication: They have no other Medium of acting on other Creatures, or being acted on by them, than the Body. Therefore it is not to be supposed that **Satan** can excite any Thought, or produce any Effect in the Soul of Man, any otherwise, than by some Motion of the animal Spirits, or by causing some Motion or Alteration in something which appertains to the Body. There is this Reason to think that the Devil cannot produce Thoughts, in the Soul immediately, or any other Way, than by the medium of the Body, **namely** That he cannot immediately see or know the Thoughts of the Soul: It is abundantly declared in the Scripture to be peculiar **to the** omniscient God to do that. But it is not likely that the Devil can **immediately produce** an Effect which is out of the Reach of his **immediate View**. It seems unreasonable to suppose that his immediate Agency, should be out of

his own Sight, or that it should be impossible for him to see what he himself immediately does. Is it not unreasonable to suppose that any Spirit or intelligent Agent, should by the Act of his Will, produce Effects, according to his Understanding, or agreeable to his own Thoughts, and that immediately; and yet the Effects produced, be beyond the Reach of his Understanding, or where he can have no immediate Perception or Discerning at all? But if this be so, that the Devil cannot produce Thoughts in the Soul immediately, or any other Way than by the animal Spirits, or by the Body; then it follows, that he never brings to pass any thing **in** the Soul, but by the Imagination or Fantasy, or by exciting external Ideas. For we know that Alterations in the Body, do immediately excite no other Sort of Ideas in the Mind, but external Ideas, or Ideas of the outward Senses, or Ideas which are of the same outward Nature. As to Reflection, Abstraction, Reasoning, **etcetera** and those Thoughts and inward Motions which are the Fruits of these Acts of the Mind, they are not the next Effects of Impressions on the Body. So that it must be only by the Imagination, that **Satan** has Access to the Soul, to tempt and delude it, or suggest any Thing to it. And this seems to be the Reason why Persons that are under the Disease of Melancholy, are commonly so visibly and remarkably subject to the Suggestions and Temptations of **Satan**: That being a Disease which peculiarly affects the animal Spirits, and is attended with Weakness of that Part of the Body which is the Fountain of the animal Spirits, even the Brain, which is, as it were, the Seat of the Fantasy. It is by Impressions made on the Brain, that any Ideas are excited in the Mind, by the Motion of the animal Spirits, or any Changes made in the Body. The Brain being thus weakened and diseased, it is less under the Command of the

higher Faculties of the Soul, and yields the more easily to extrinsic Impressions, and is overpowered by the disordered Motions of the animal Spirits; and so the Devil has greater Advantage to affect the Mind, by working on the Imagination. And thus **Satan**, when he casts in those horrid Suggestions into the Minds of many **melancholy** Persons, in which they have no Hand themselves, he does it by **exciting** imaginary Ideas, either of some dreadful Words or Sentences, or other horrid outward Ideas. And when he tempts other Persons who are not melancholy, he does it by presenting to the Imagination, in a lively and alluring Manner, the Objects of their Lusts, or by exciting Ideas of Words, and so by them exciting Thoughts; or by promoting an Imagination of outward Actions, Events, Circumstances, **etcetera**. Innumerable are the Ways by which the Mind might be led on to all Kind of evil Thoughts, by exciting external Ideas in the Imagination.

If Persons keep no Guard at these Avenues of **Satan**, by which he has Access to the Soul, to tempt and delude it, they will be likely to have enough of him. And especially, if instead of guarding against him, they lay themselves open to him, and seek and invite him, because he appears as an Angel of Light, and counterfeits the Illuminations and Graces of the Spirit of God, by inward Whispers, and immediate Suggestions of Facts and Events, pleasant Voices, beautiful Images, and other Impressions on the Imagination. There are many who are deluded by such Things, and are lifted up with them, and seek after them, that have a continued Course of them, and can have them almost when they will; and especially when their Pride and Vain-glory has most Occasion for them, to make a Show of them before Company. It is with them, something as it is with those who are Professors of the Art of telling where

lost Things are to be found, by Impressions made on their Imaginations; they laying themselves open to the Devil, he is always at Hand to give them the desired Impression.

Before I finish what I would say on this Head of Imaginations, counterfeiting spiritual Light, and Affections arising from them, I would renewedly (to prevent Misunderstanding of what has been said) desire it may be observed, that I am far from determining that no Affections are spiritual which are attended with imaginary Ideas. Such is the Nature of Man, that he can scarcely think of any Thing intensely, without some Kind of outward Ideas. They arise and interpose themselves unavoidably, in the Course of a Man's Thoughts; though oftentimes they are very confused, and are not what the Mind regards. When the Mind is much engaged, and the Thoughts intense, oftentimes the Imagination is more strong, and the outward Idea more lively; especially in Persons of some Constitutions of Body. But there is a great Difference between these two Things, **namely Lively Imaginations arising from strong Affections,** and **Strong Affections arising from lively Imaginations.** The former may be, and doubtless often is, in Case of truly gracious Affections. The Affections do not arise from the Imagination, nor have any Dependence upon it; but on the contrary, the Imagination is only the accidental Effect, or Consequent of the Affection, through the Infirmary of human Nature. But when the latter is the Case, as it often is, that the Affection arises from the Imagination, and is built upon it, as its Foundation, instead of a spiritual Illumination or Discovery; then is the Affection, however elevated, worthless and vain. And this is

the Drift of what has been now said, of Impressions on the Imagination. Having observed this, I proceed to another Mark of gracious Affections.

5. Truly gracious Affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual Conviction of the Judgment, of the Reality and Certainty of divine Things.

This seems to be implied in the Text that was laid as the Foundation of this Discourse, **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.**

All those who are truly gracious Persons have a solid, full, thorough and effectual Conviction of the Truth of the great Things of the Gospel. I mean that they no longer halt between two Opinions, the great Doctrines of the Gospel cease to be any longer doubtful Things, or Matters of Opinion, which, though probable, are yet disputable; but with them, they are Points settled and determined, as undoubted and indisputable; so that they are not afraid to venture their All upon their Truth. Their Conviction is an **effectual** Conviction; so that the great, spiritual, mysterious, and invisible Things of the Gospel, have the **Influence** of real and certain Things upon them; they have the **Weight** and **Power** of real Things in their Hearts; and accordingly rule in their Affections, and govern them through the Course of their Lives. With Respect to Christ's being the Son of God, and Saviour of the World, and the great Things he has revealed concerning Himself, and his Father, and another World, they have not only a predominating Opinion that these Things are true, and so yield their Assent, as they do in many other Matters of doubtful Speculation; but they **see that it is really so**: Their Eyes are opened, so that they see that really

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And as to the Things which Christ has revealed, of God's eternal Purposes and Designs, concerning fallen Man, and the glorious and everlasting Things prepared for the Saints in another World, they see that they are so indeed: And therefore these Things are of great Weight with them, and have a mighty Power upon their Hearts, and Influence over their Practice, in some Measure answerable to their infinite Importance.

That all true Christians have such a Kind of Conviction of the Truth of the Things of the Gospel, is abundantly manifest from the holy Scriptures. I will mention a few Places of many; Matthew 16:15, 16, 17. **But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered, and said unto him, blessed are you Simon Barjona:—my Father which is in Heaven, hath revealed it unto you.** John 6:68, 69. **Thou hast the Words of eternal Life: And we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.** John 17:6, 7, 8. **I have manifested thy Name to the Men which thou gavest me out of the World.—Now they have known that all Things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee: For I have given unto them, the Words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me.** Acts 8:37. **If you believe with all your Heart, you may.** 2 Corinthians 4:11, 12, 13, 14. **We who live, are always delivered unto Death, for Jesus sake:—Death worketh in us;—we having the Spirit of Faith; according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we**

also believe, and therefore speak: Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. Together with Verse 16. For which Cause, we faint not. And Verse 18. while we look not at the Things which are seen, etc. And Chapter 5:1. For we know that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God,— And Verse 6, 7, 8. Therefore we are always confident; knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord: For we walk by Faith, not by Sight; we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and present with the Lord. 2 Timothy 1:12. For the which Cause, I also suffer these Things: Nevertheless, I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that Day. Hebrews 3:6. Whose House are we, if we hold fast the Confidence, and the Rejoicing of the Hope, firm unto the End. Hebrews 11:1. Now Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen: Together with that whole Chapter. 1 John 4:13, 14, 15, 16. 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 to be the Saviour of the World. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the Love that God hath to us. Chapter 5:4, 5. For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World: And this is the Victory that over-

cometh the World, even our Faith. Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Therefore truly gracious Affections are attended with such a Kind of Conviction and Persuasion of the Truth of the Things of the Gospel, and Sight of their Evidence and Reality, as these and other Scriptures speak of.

There are many religious Affections, which are not attended with such a Conviction of the Judgment. There are many Apprehensions and Ideas which some have, that they call divine Discoveries, which are affecting, but not convincing. Though for a little while, they may seem to be more persuaded of the Truth of the Things of Religion, than they used to be, and may yield a forward Assent, like many of Christ's Hearers, who believed for a while; yet they have no thorough and effectual Conviction; nor is there any great abiding Change in them, in this Respect, that whereas formerly they did not realize the great Things of the Gospel, now these Things, with Regard to Reality and Certainty, appear new to them, and they behold them quite in another View than they used to do. There are many Persons who have been exceedingly raised with religious Affections, and think they have been converted, they do not go about the World any more convinced of the Truth of the Gospel, than they used to be; or at least, there is no remarkable Alteration: They are not Men who live under the Influence and Power of a realizing Conviction of the infinite and eternal Things which the Gospel reveals: If they were, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. Because their Affections are not attended with a thorough Conviction of the Mind, they are not at all to be depended on; however great a Snow

and Noise they make, it is like the Blaze of Tow, or Crackling of Thorns, or like the forward flourishing Blade on stony Ground, that has no Root, nor Deepness of Earth to maintain its Life.

Some Persons, under high Affections, and a confident Persuasion of their good Estate, have that, which they very ignorantly call a Seeing the Truth of the Word of God, and which is very far from it, after this Manner; they have some Text of Scripture coming to their Minds, in a sudden and extraordinary Manner, immediately declaring to them (as they suppose) that their Sins are forgiven or that God loves them, and will save them; and it may be have a Chain of Scriptures coming one after another, to the same Purpose; and they are convinced that it is Truth; **that is** they are confident that it is certainly so, that their Sins are forgiven, and God does love them, **etc.**—; they say they know it is so; and when the Words of Scripture are suggested to them, and as they suppose immediately spoken to them by God, in this Meaning, they are ready to cry out, **Truth, Truth! It is certainly so! The Word of God is true!** And this they call a Seeing the Truth of the Word of God. Whereas the Whole of their Faith amounts to no more, than only a strong Confidence of their own good Estate, and so a Confidence that those Words are true, which they suppose tell them they are in a good Estate: When indeed (as was shown before) there is no Scripture which declares that any Person is in a good Estate directly, or any other Way than by Consequence. So that this, instead of being a real Sight of the Word of God, is a Sight of nothing but a Phantom, and is all over a Delusion. Truly to see the Truth of the Word of God, is to see the Truth of the Gospel; which is the glorious Doctrine the Word of God contains, concerning God, and Jesus Christ, and the Way of

Salvation by him, and the World of Glory that he is entered into, and purchased for all them who believe; and not a Revelation that such and such particular Persons are true Christians, and shall go to Heaven. Therefore those Affections which arise from no other Persuasion of the Truth of the Word of God than this, arise from Delusion, and not true Conviction; and consequently are themselves delusive and vain.

But if the religious Affections that Persons have, do indeed arise from a strong Persuasion of the Truth of the Christian Religion; their Affections are not the better, unless their Persuasion be a **reasonable** Persuasion or Conviction. By a reasonable Conviction, I mean a Conviction founded on real Evidence, or upon that which is a good Reason, or just Ground of Conviction. Men may have a strong Persuasion that the Christian Religion is true, when their Persuasion is not at all built on Evidence, but altogether on Education, and the Opinion of others; as many **Muslims** are strongly persuaded of the Truth of the **Muslim** Religion, because their Fathers, and Neighbours, and Nation believe it. That Belief of the Truth of the Christian Religion which is built on the very same Grounds, with **Muslims** Belief of the **Muslim** Religion, is the same Sort of Belief. And though the Thing believed happens to be better; yet That does not make the Belief itself, to be of a better Sort: For though the Thing believed happens to be true; yet the Belief of it is not owing to this Truth, but to Education. So that as the Conviction is no better than the **Muslims** Conviction; so the Affections that flow from it, are no better, in themselves, than the religious Affections of **Muslims**.

But if that Belief of christian Doctrines, which Persons Affections arise from, be not merely from Education, but indeed from Reasons and Arguments which are offered, it will not from thence necessarily follow, that their Affections are truly gracious: For in order to that, it is requisite, not only that the Belief which their Affections arise from, should be a **reasonable**, but also a **spiritual** Belief or Conviction. I suppose none will doubt but that some natural Men do yield a Kind of Assent of their Judgments to the Truth of the christian Religion, from the rational Proofs or Arguments that are offered to evince it. **Judas**, without Doubt, thought **Jesus** to be the **Messiah**, from the Things which he saw and heard; but yet all along was a Devil. So in **John** 2. 23, 24, 25. we read of **many that believed in Christ's Name, when they saw the Miracles that he did**; whom yet Christ knew had not that within them, which was to be depended on. So **Simon the Sorcerer** believed, when he beheld the Miracles and Signs which were done; but yet remained **in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity**, Acts 8. 13, 23. And if there is such a Belief or Assent of the Judgment in some natural Men, none can doubt but that religious Affections may arise from that Assent or Belief; as we read of some who **believed for a while**, that were greatly affected, and **anon, with Joy received the Word**.

It is evident that there is such a Thing as a **spiritual** Belief or Conviction of the Truth of the Things of the Gospel, or a Belief that is peculiar to those who are spiritual, or who are regenerated, and have the Spirit of God, in his holy Communications, and dwelling in them as a vital Principle. So that the Conviction they have, doesn't only differ from that which natural Men have, in its Concomitants, in that it is accompanied with good Works; but the

Belief itself is diverse, the Assent and Conviction of the Judgment is of a Kind peculiar to those who are spiritual, and that which natural Men are wholly destitute of. This is evident by the Scripture, if anything at all is so; John 17. 8. **They have believed that thou didst send me.** Titus 1. 1. **According to the Faith of God's Elect, and the acknowledging of the Truth which is after Godliness.** John 16. 27. **The Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.** 1 John 4. 15. **Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.** Chapter 5. 1. **Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.** Verse 10. **He that believes on the Son of God, has the Witness in himself.**

What a **spiritual Conviction** of the Judgment is, we are naturally led to determine from what has been said already, under the former Head of a **spiritual Understanding**. The Conviction of the Judgment arises from the Illumination of the Understanding: The passing of a right Judgment on Things, depends on having a right Apprehension or Idea of Things. And therefore it follows, that a spiritual Conviction of the Truth of the great Things of the Gospel, is such a Conviction, as arises from having a spiritual View or Apprehension of those Things in the Mind. And this is also evident from the Scripture, which often represents, that a saving Belief of the Reality and Divinity of the Things proposed and exhibited to us in the Gospel, is from the Spirit of God's enlightening the Mind, to have right Apprehensions of the Nature of those Things, and so as it were unveiling Things, or revealing them, and enabling the Mind to view them and see them as they are: Luke 10. 21, 22. **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. All Things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no Man knows who the Son is, but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will **REVEAL** him. John 6. 40. And this is the Will of him that sent me; that every one that **SEES** the Son, and **BELIEVES** on him, may have everlasting Life. Where it is plain, that true Faith arises from a spiritual Sight of Christ. And John 17. 6, 7, 8. **I have MANIFESTED thy Name unto the Men which thou gavest me out of the World—Now they have known that all Things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee; for I have given unto them the Words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.** Where Christ's manifesting God's Name to the Disciples, or giving them a true Apprehension and View of divine Things, was that whereby they knew that Christ's Doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, and was sent by him. Matthew 16. 16, 17. Simon Peter said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona, for Flesh and Blood has not REVEALED it unto you, but my Father which is in Heaven.** 1 John 5. 10. **He that believes on the Son of God, has the Witness in himself.** Galatians 1. 14, 15, 16. **Being more exceedingly zealous of the Traditions of my Fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my Mother's Womb, and**

called me by his Grace, to REVEAL his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Heathen, immediately I conferred not with Flesh and Blood.

If it be so, that That is a spiritual Conviction of the Divinity and Reality of the Things exhibited in the Gospel, which arises from a spiritual Understanding of those Things; I have shown already what that is, **namely** a Sense and Taste of the divine, supreme and holy Excellency and Beauty of those Things. So that then is the Mind spiritually convinced of the Divinity and Truth of the great Things of the Gospel, when that Conviction arises, either directly or remotely, from such a Sense or View of their divine Excellency and Glory as is there exhibited. This clearly follows from Things that have been already said; and for this the Scripture is very plain and express. 2 Corinthians 3. 3, 4, 5, 6. **But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this World has blinded the Minds of them that BELIEVE not, lest the Light of the GLORIOUS GOSPEL of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your Servants for Jesus Sake. For God, who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, has shined in our Hearts, to give the LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD, in the Face of Jesus Christ.** Together with the last Verse of the foregoing Chapter, which introduces this, **But we all with open Face, beholding as in a Glass, the GLORY OF THE LORD are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.** Nothing

can be more evident then that a saving Belief of the Gospel, is here spoken of, by the Apostle, as arising from the Mind's being enlightened, to behold the divine Glory of the Things it exhibits.

This View or Sense of the divine Glory, and unparalleled Beauty of the Things exhibited to us in the Gospel, has a Tendency to convince the Mind of their Divinity, two Ways; **directly**; and more **indirectly**, and **remotely**. 1. A View of this divine Glory **directly**, convinces the Mind of the Divinity of these Things, as this Glory is in itself a direct, clear, and all-conquering Evidence of it; especially when clearly discovered, or when this supernatural Sense is given in a good Degree.

He that has his Judgment thus **directly** convinced and assured of the Divinity of the Things of the Gospel, by a clear View of their divine Glory, has a **reasonable** Conviction; his Belief and Assurance is altogether agreeable to Reason; because the divine Glory and Beauty of divine Things is in itself, real Evidence of their Divinity, and the most direct and strong Evidence. He that truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme Glory of those Things which are divine, does as it were know their Divinity intuitively; he not only argues that they are divine, but he sees that they are divine; he sees That in them wherein Divinity chiefly consists; for in this Glory, which is so vastly and inexpressibly distinguished from the Glory of artificial Things, and all other Glory, does mainly consist the true Notion of Divinity: God is God, and distinguished from all other Beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divine Beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other Beauty. They therefore that see the Stamp of this Glory in divine Things, they see Divinity in them, they see God in them, and so see them to be divine; because they see that in them wherein the truest Idea of

Divinity does consist. Thus a Soul may have a Kind of intuitive Knowledge of the Divinity of the Things exhibited in the Gospel; not that he judges the Doctrines of the Gospel to be from God, without any Argument or Deduction at all; but it is without any long Chain of Arguments; the Argument is but one, and the Evidence direct; the Mind ascends to the Truth of the Gospel but by one Step, and that is its divine Glory.

It would be very strange, if any professing Christian should deny it to be possible that there should be an Excellency in divine Things, which is so transcendent, and exceedingly different from what is in other Things, that if it were seen, would evidently distinguish them. We can't rationally doubt, but that Things that are **divine**, that appertain to the supreme Being, are vastly different from Things that are **human**; that there is a god-like, high, and glorious Excellency in them, that does so distinguish them from the Things which are of Men, that the Difference is ineffable; and therefore such, as, if seen, will have a most convincing, satisfying Influence upon any one, that they are what they are, **namely** divine. Doubtless there is that Glory and Excellency in the divine Being, by which he is so infinitely distinguished from all other Beings, that if it were seen, he might be known by it. It would therefore be very unreasonable to deny that it is possible for God, to give Manifestations of this distinguishing Excellency, in Things by which he is pleased to make himself known; and that this distinguishing Excellency may be clearly seen in them. There are **natural** Excellencies that are very evidently distinguishing of the Subjects or Authors, to any one who beholds them. How is the Speech of an understanding Man different from that of a little Child! And how greatly distinguished is the Speech of some Men of

great Genius, as **Homer, Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison,** and others, from that of many other understanding Men! There are no Limits to be set to the Degrees of Manifestation of mental Excellency, that there may be in Speech. But the Appearances of the **natural** Perfections of God, in the Manifestations he makes of himself, may doubtless be unspeakably more evidently distinguishing, than the Appearances of those Excellencies of Worms of the Dust, in which they differ one from another. He that is well acquainted with Mankind, and their Works, by viewing the Sun, may know it is no human Work. And it is reasonable to suppose, that when Christ comes at the End of the World, in the Glory of his Father, it will be with such ineffable Appearances of Divinity, as will leave no Doubt to the Inhabitants of the World, even the most obstinate Infidels, that he who appears is a divine Person. But above all, do the Manifestations of the **moral** and **spiritual** Glory of the divine Being (which is the proper Beauty of the Divinity) bring their own Evidence, and tend to assure the Heart. Thus the Disciples were assured that Jesus was the Son of God, for **they beheld his Glory, as the Glory of the only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth,** John 1. 14. When Christ appeared in the Glory of his Transfiguration to his Disciples, with that outward Glory, to their bodily Eyes, which was a sweet and admirable Symbol and Semblance of his spiritual Glory, together with his spiritual Glory it self, manifested to their Minds; the Manifestation of Glory was such, as did perfectly, and with good Reason, assure them of his Divinity; as appears by what one of them, **namely** the Apostle **Peter,** says concerning it, 2 Peter 1. 16, 17, 18. **For we have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of**

our Lord Jesus Christ, but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty: For he received from God the Father, Honour and Glory; when there came such a Voice to him from the excellent Glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice which came from Heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy Mount. The Apostle calls that Mount, **the holy Mount**, because the Manifestations of Christ which were there made to their Minds, and which their Minds were especially impressed and ravished with, was the Glory of his **Holiness**, or the Beauty of his **moral Excellency**; or, as another of these Disciples, who saw it, expresses it, **His Glory, as full of Grace and Truth.**

Now this distinguishing Glory of the divine Being has its brightest Appearance and Manifestation, in the Things proposed and exhibited to us in the Gospel, the Doctrines there taught, the Word there spoken, and the divine Counsels, Acts and Works there revealed. These Things have the clearest, most admirable, and distinguishing Representations and Exhibitions of the Glory of God's moral Perfections, that ever were made to the World. And if there be such a distinguishing, evidential Manifestation of divine Glory in the Gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that there may be such a Thing as Seeing it: What should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no Argument that it can't be seen, that some don't see it; though they may be discerning Men in temporal Matters. If there be such ineffable, distinguishing, evidential Excellencies in the Gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that they are such as are not to be discerned, but by the special Influence and Enlightenings of the Spirit of God. There is need of uncommon Force of Mind to discern the distinguishing Excellencies of the Works of Authors of great

Genius: Those Things in **Milton**, which to mean Judges, appear tasteless and Imperfections, are his inimitable Excellencies in the Eyes of those who are of greater Discerning, and better Taste. And if there be a Book, which God is the Author of, it is most reasonable to suppose that the distinguishing Glories of his Word are of such a Kind, as that the Sin and Corruption of Men's Hearts, which above all Things alienates Men from the Deity, and makes the Heart dull and stupid to any Sense or Taste of those Things wherein the moral Glory of the divine Perfections consists; I say, it is but reasonable to suppose, that this would blind Men from discerning the Beauties of such a Book; and that therefore they will not see them, but as God is pleased to enlighten them, and restore an holy Taste, to discern and relish divine Beauties.

This Sense of the spiritual Excellency and Beauty of divine Things, does also tend **directly** to convince the Mind of the Truth of the Gospel, as there are very many of the most important Things declared in the Gospel, that are hid from the Eyes of natural Men, the Truth of which does in Effect consist in this Excellency, or does so immediately depend upon it and result from it; that in this Excellency's being seen, the Truth of those Things is seen. As soon as ever the Eyes are opened to behold the holy Beauty and Amiableness that is in divine Things, a Multitude of most important Doctrines of the Gospel, that depend upon it, (which all appear strange and dark to natural Men) are at once seen to be true. As for Instance, hereby appears the Truth of what the Word of God declares concerning the exceeding Evil of Sin; for the same Eye that discerns the transcendent Beauty of Holiness, necessarily therein sees the exceeding Odiousness of Sin: The same Taste which relishes the Sweetness of true moral Good, tastes the

Bitterness of moral Evil. And by this Means a Man sees his own Sinfulness and Loathsomeness; for he has now a Sense to discern Objects of this Nature; and so sees the Truth of what the Word of God declares concerning the exceeding Sinfulness of Mankind, which before he did not see. He now sees the dreadful Pollution of his Heart, and the desperate Depravity of his Nature, in a new Manner; for his Soul has now a Sense given it to feel the Pain of such a Disease: And this shows him the Truth of what the Scripture reveals concerning the Corruption of Man's Nature, his original Sin, and the ruinous undone Condition Man is in, and his need of a Saviour, his need of the mighty Power of God to renew his Heart and change his Nature. Men by seeing the true Excellency of Holiness, do see the Glory of all those Things, which both Reason and Scripture show to be in the divine Being; for it has been shown that the Glory of them depends on this: And hereby they see the Truth of all that the Scripture declares concerning God's glorious Excellency and Majesty, his being the Fountain of all Good, the only Happiness of the Creature, etc. And this again shows the Mind the Truth of what the Scripture teaches concerning the Evil of Sin against so glorious a God; and also the Truth of what it teaches concerning Sin's just Desert of that dreadful Punishment which it reveals; and also concerning the Impossibility of our offering any Satisfaction, or sufficient Atonement, for that which is so infinitely evil and heinous. And this again shows the Truth of what the Scripture reveals concerning the Necessity of a Saviour, to offer an Atonement of infinite Value for Sin. And this Sense of spiritual Beauty that has been spoken of, enables the Soul to see the Glory of those Things which the Gospel reveals concerning the Person of Christ; and so enables to

see the exceeding Beauty and Dignity of his Person, appearing in what the Gospel exhibits of his Word, Works, Acts and Life: And this Apprehension of the superlative Dignity of his Person, shows the Truth of what the Gospel declares concerning the Value of his Blood and Righteousness, and so the infinite Excellency of the Offering he has made to God for us, and so its Sufficiency to atone for our Sins, and recommend us to God. And thus the Spirit of God discovers the Way of Salvation by Christ: Thus the Soul sees the Fitness and Suitableness of this Way of Salvation, the admirable Wisdom of the Contrivance, and the perfect Answerableness of the Provision that the Gospel exhibits, (as made for us) to our Necessities. A Sense of true divine Beauty being given to the Soul, the Soul discerns the Beauty of every Part of the Gospel Scheme. This also shows the Soul the Truth of what the Word of God declares concerning Man's chief Happiness, as consisting in holy Exercises and Enjoyments. This shows the Truth of what the Gospel declares concerning the unspeakable Glory of the heavenly State. And what the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and the Writings of the Apostles declare concerning the Glory of the Messiah's Kingdom, is now all plain; and also what the Scripture teaches concerning the Reasons and Grounds of our Duty. The Truth of all these Things revealed in the Scripture, and many more that might be mentioned, appear to the Soul, only by imparting that spiritual Taste of divine Beauty, which has been spoken of. They being hidden Things to the Soul before.

And besides all this, the Truth of all those Things which the Scripture says about experimental Religion, is hereby known; for they are now experienced. And this convinces the Soul that one who knew the Heart of Man, better than we know our own Hearts,

and perfectly knew the Nature of Virtue and Holiness, was the Author of the Scriptures. And the opening to View, with such Clearness, such a World of wonderful and glorious Truth in the Gospel, that before was unknown, being quite above the View of a natural Man, but now appearing so clear and bright, has a powerful and invincible Influence on the Soul, to persuade of the Divinity of the Gospel.

Unless Men may come to a reasonable solid Persuasion and Conviction of the Truth of the Gospel, by the internal Evidences of it, in the Way that has been spoken, namely, By a Sight of its Glory; it is impossible that those who are illiterate, and unacquainted with History, should have any thorough and effectual Conviction of it at all. They may without this, see a great deal of Probability of it; it may be reasonable for them to give much Credit to what learned Men, and Historians tell them; and they may tell them so much, that it may look very probable and rational to them, that the Christian Religion is true; and so much that they would be very unreasonable not to entertain this Opinion. But to have a Conviction, so clear, and evident, and assuring, as to be sufficient to induce them, with Boldness, to sell all, confidently and fearlessly to run the Venture of the Loss of all Things, and of enduring the most exquisite and long-continued Torments, and to trample the World under Foot, and count all Things but Dung, for Christ; the Evidence they can have from History, cannot be sufficient. It is impossible that Men, who have not something of a general View of the historical World, or the Series of History from Age to Age, should come at the Force of Arguments for the Truth of Christianity, drawn from History, to that Degree, as effectually to induce them to venture their all upon it. After all that learned Men

have said to them, there will remain innumerable Doubts on their Minds: They will be ready, when pinched with some great Trial of their Faith, to say, How do I know this, or that? How do I know when these Histories were written? Learned Men tell me these Histories were so and so attested in the Day of them; but how do I know that there were such Attestations then? They tell me there is equal Reason to believe these Facts, as any whatsoever that are related at such a Distance; but how do I know that other Facts which are related of those Ages, ever were? Those who have not something of a general View of the Series of historical Events, and of the State of Mankind from Age to Age, cannot see the clear Evidence from History, of the Truth of Facts, in distant Ages; but there will endless Doubts and Scruples remain.

But the Gospel was not given only for learned Men. There are at least Nineteen in Twenty, if not Ninety-nine in a Hundred, of those for whom the Scriptures were written, that are not capable of any certain or effectual Conviction of the divine Authority of the Scriptures, by such Arguments as learned Men make use of. If Men who have been brought up in Heathenism must wait for a clear and certain Conviction of the Truth of Christianity, nor have I Learning and Acquaintance with the History of Ages enough to see clearly the Force of such Kind of Arguments: it will make the Evidence of the Gospel, to them, immensely difficult, and will render the Propagation of the Gospel among them infinitely difficult. Miserable is the Condition of the **Heathen**, and others who have lately manifested a Desire to be instructed in Christianity: if they can come at no Evidence of the Truth of Christianity, sufficient to induce them to sell all for Christ, in no other Way but this.

It is unreasonable to suppose, that God has provided for his People, no more than probable Evidences of the Truth of the Gospel. He has with great Care, abundantly provided, and given them, the most convincing, assuring, satisfying and manifold Evidence of his Faithfulness in the Covenant of Grace; and as **David** says, **made a Covenant, ordered in all Things and sure.** Therefore it is rational to suppose, that at the same Time, he would not fail of ordering the Matter so, that there should not be wanting, as great, and clear Evidence, **that this is his Covenant,** and that these Promises are his Promises; or which is the same Thing, that the Christian Religion is true, and that the Gospel is his Word. Otherwise in vain are those great Assurances he has given of his Faithfulness in his Covenant, by confirming it with his Oath, and so variously establishing it by Seals and Pledges. For the Evidence that it is his Covenant, is properly the Foundation on which all the Force and Effect of those other Assurances do stand. We may therefore undoubtedly suppose and conclude, that there is some Sort of Evidence which God has given, that this Covenant, and these Promises are his, beyond all mere Probability; that there are some Grounds of Assurance of it held forth, which, if we are not blind to them, tend to give an higher Persuasion, than any arguing from History, human Tradition, **et cetera** which the Illiterate, and Unacquainted with History, are capable of; yea, that which is good Ground of the highest and most perfect Assurance, that Mankind have in any Case whatsoever; agreeable to those high Expressions which the Apostle uses, Hebrews 10:22. **Let us draw near in FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH.** And Colossians 2:2. **That their Hearts might be comforted, being knit together in Love, and unto ALL RICHES, OF THE FULL**

ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING, to the Acknowledgment of the Mystery of God and of the Father, and of Christ. It is reasonable to suppose, that God would give the greatest Evidence, of those Things which are greatest, and the Truth of which is of greatest Importance to us: And that we therefore, if we are wise, and act rationally, shall have the greatest Desire of having full, undoubting, and perfect Assurance of. But it is certain, that such an Assurance is not to be attained, by the greater Part of them who live under the Gospel, by Arguments derived from ancient Traditions, Histories, and Monuments.

And if we come to Fact and Experience, there is not the least Reason to suppose, that One in a Hundred of those who have been sincere Christians, and have had a Heart to sell all for Christ, have come by their Conviction of the Truth of the Gospel, this Way. If we read over the Histories of the many Thousands that died Martyrs for Christ, since the Beginning of the Reformation, and have cheerfully undergone extreme Tortures, in a Confidence of the Truth of the Gospel, and consider their Circumstances and Advantages; how few of them were there, that we can reasonably suppose, ever came by their assured Persuasion, this Way; those for whom it was possible, reasonably to receive so full and strong an Assurance, from such Arguments! Many of them were weak Women and Children, and the greater Part of them illiterate Persons, many of whom had been brought up in Popish Ignorance and Darkness, and were but newly come out of it, and lived and died in Times, wherein those Arguments for the Truth of Christianity from Antiquity and History, been but very imperfectly handled. And indeed, it is but very lately that these Arguments have been set in a clear and convincing Light, even by learned Men

themselves: And since it has been done, there never were fewer thorough Believers, among those who have been educated in the true Religion: Infidelity never prevailed so much, in any Age, as in this, wherein these Arguments are handled to the greatest Advantage.

The true Martyrs of Jesus Christ, are not those who have only been strong in Opinion that the Gospel of Christ is true, but **those that have seen the Truth of it**; as the very Name of Martyrs or Witnesses (by which they are called in Scripture) implies. Those are very improperly called Witnesses of the Truth of any Thing, who only declare they are very much of Opinion that such a Thing is true. Those only are proper Witnesses who can, and do testify that they have seen the Truth of the Thing they assert; John 3:11. **We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.** John 1:34. **And I saw, and bear Record, that this is the Son of God.** 1 John 4:14. **And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son, to be the Saviour of the World.** Acts 22:14, 15. **The God of our Fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his Will, and see that just One, and shouldest hear the Voice of his Mouth: For thou shalt be his Witness unto all Men, of what thou hast seen and heard.** But the true Martyrs of Jesus Christ are called his Witnesses: and all the Saints, who by their holy Practice under great Trials, declare that Faith, **which is the SUBSTANCE of Things hoped for, and the EVIDENCE of Things not seen**, are called Witnesses; **Hebrews** 11:1 and 12:1 because by their Profession and Practice, they declare their Assurance of the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel, having had the Eyes of their Minds enlightened, to see Divinity in the Gospel, or to behold that unparalleled, ineffably ex-

cellent, and truly divine Glory shining in it, which is altogether distinguishing, evidential, and convincing: So that they may truly be said to have seen God in it, and to have seen that it is indeed divine: And so can speak in the Style of Witnesses: and not only say, that **they think** the Gospel is divine, but say, that **it is divine**, giving it in as their Testimony, because they have seen it to be so. Doubtless **Peter, James, and John**, after they had seen that excellent Glory of Christ in the Mount, would have been ready, when they came down, to speak in the Language of Witnesses, and to say positively that **Jesus is the Son of God**; as **Peter** says, **they were Eye-witnesses**, 2 Peter 1:16. And so all Nations will be ready positively to say this, when they shall behold his Glory at the Day of Judgment; though what will be universally seen, will be only his natural Glory, and not his moral and spiritual Glory, which is much more distinguishing. But yet, it must be noted, that among those who have a spiritual Sight of the divine Glory of the Gospel, there is a great Variety of Degrees of Strength of Faith, as there is a vast Variety of the Degrees of Clearness of Views of this Glory: But there is no true and saving Faith, or spiritual Conviction of the Judgment, of the Truth of the Gospel, that has nothing in it, of this Manifestation of its internal Evidence, in some Degree. The Gospel of the blessed God does not go abroad a begging for its Evidence, so much as some think; it has its highest and most proper Evidence in itself. Though great Use may be made of external Arguments, they are not to be neglected, but highly prized and valued; for they may be greatly serviceable to awaken Unbelievers, and bring them to serious Consideration, and to confirm the Faith of true Saints: Yea they may be in some Respects subservient **to the begetting** of a saving Faith in Men. Though what was said be-

fore remains true, that there is no spiritual Conviction of the Judgment, but what arises from an Apprehension of the spiritual Beauty and Glory of divine Things: For, as has been observed, this Apprehension or View has a Tendency to convince the Mind of the Truth of the Gospel, two Ways, either directly or indirectly. Having therefore already observed how it does this directly, I proceed now

2. To observe how a View of this divine Glory does convince the Mind of the Truth of Christianity, more indirectly.

First, It does so as the Prejudices of the Heart against the Truth of divine Things are hereby removed, so that the Mind thereby has open to the Force of the Reasons which are offered. The Mind of Man is naturally full of Enmity against the Doctrines of the Gospel; which is a Disadvantage to those Arguments that prove their Truth, and causes them to lose their Force upon the Mind: But when a Person has discovered to him the divine Excellency of Christian Doctrines, this destroys that Enmity, and removes the Prejudices, and sanctifies the Reason, and causes it to be open and free. Hence is a vast Difference, as to the Force that Arguments have to convince the Mind. Hence was the very different Effect, which Christ's Miracles had to convince the **Disciples**, from what they had to convince the **Scribes** and **Pharisees**: Not that they had a stronger Reason, or had their Reason more improved; but their Reason was sanctified, and those blinding Prejudices, which the **Scribes** and **Pharisees** were under, were removed, by the Sense they had of the Excellency of Christ and his Doctrine.

Secondly, It not only removes the Hindrances of Reason, but positively helps Reason. It makes even the speculative Notions more lively. It assists and engages the Attention of the Mind to that

Kind of Objects which causes it to have a clearer View of them, and more clearly to see their mutual Relations. The Ideas themselves, which otherwise are dim and obscure, by this Means have a Light cast upon them, and are impressed with greater Strength; so that the Mind can better judge of them, as he that beholds the Objects on the Face of the Earth, when the Light of the Sun is cast upon them, is under greater Advantage to discern them, in their true Forms, and mutual Relations, and to see the Evidences of divine Wisdom and Skill in their Contrivance, than he that sees them in a dim Starlight, or Twilight.

What has been said, may serve in some Measure to show the Nature of a spiritual Conviction of the Judgment of the Truth and Reality of divine Things; and so to distinguish truly gracious Affections from others; for gracious Affections are evermore attended with such a Conviction of the Judgment.

But before I dismiss this Head, it will be needful to observe the Ways whereby some are deceived, with respect to this Matter; and take Notice of several Things, that are sometimes taken for a spiritual and saving Belief of the Truth of the Things of Religion, which are indeed very diverse from it.

1. There is a Degree of Conviction of the Truth of the great Things of Religion, that arises from the common Enlightenings of the Spirit of God. That more lively and sensible Apprehension of the Things of Religion, with Respect to what is **natural** in them, such as natural Men have who are under Awakenings and common Illuminations, will give some Degree of Conviction of the Truth of divine Things, beyond what they had before they were thus enlightened. For hereby they see the Manifestations there are, in the Revelation made in the holy Scriptures, and things exhibited in

that Revelation, of the natural Perfections of God, such as his Greatness, Power, and awful Majesty; which tends to convince the Mind, that this is the Word of a great and terrible God. From the Tokens there are of God's Greatness and Majesty in his Word and Works, which they have a great Sense of, from the common Influence of the Spirit of God, they may have a much greater Conviction that these are indeed the Word and Works of a very great invisible Being. And the lively Apprehension of the Greatness of God, which natural Men may have, tends to make them sensible of the great Guilt, which Sin against such a God brings, and the Dreadfulness of his Wrath for Sin. And this tends to cause them more easily and fully to believe the Revelation the Scripture makes of another World, and of the extreme Misery it threatens, there to be inflicted on Sinners. And so from that Sense of the great natural Good there is in the Things of Religion, which is sometimes given in common Illuminations, Men may be the more induced to believe the Truth of Religion. These Things Persons may have, and yet have no Sense of the Beauty and Amiableness of the moral and holy Excellency that is in the Things of Religion; and therefore no spiritual Conviction of their Truth. But yet such Convictions are sometimes mistaken, for saving Convictions, and the Affections flowing from them, for saving Affections.

2. The extraordinary Impressions which are made on the Imaginations of some Persons, in the Visions, and immediate strong Impulses and Suggestions that they have, as though they saw Sight, and had Words spoken to them, may, and often do beget a strong Persuasion of the Truth of invisible Things. Though the general Tendency of such Things, in their final Issue, is to draw Men off from the Word of God, and to cause them to reject the

Gospel, and to establish Unbelief and Atheism; yet for the present, they may, and often do beget a confident Persuasion of the Truth of some Things that are revealed in the Scriptures; however their Confidence is founded in Delusion, and so nothing worth. As for Instance, if a Person has by some invisible Agent, immediately and strongly impressed on his Imagination, the Appearance of a bright Light, and glorious Form of a Person seated on a Throne, with great external Majesty and Beauty, uttering some remarkable Words, with great Force and Energy; The Person who is the Subject of such an Operation, may be from hence confident, that there are invisible Agents, spiritual Beings from what he has experienced, knowing that he had no Hand himself in this extraordinary Effect, which he has experienced: And he may also be confident that this is Christ, whom he saw and heard speaking: And this may make him confident that there is a Christ, and that Christ reigns on a Throne in Heaven, as he saw him; and may be confident that the Words which he heard him speak are true, **et cetera**—In the same Manner, as the lying Miracles of the Papists, may for the present, beget in the Minds of the ignorant deluded People, a strong Persuasion of the Truth of many Things declared in the New Testament. Thus when the Images of Christ, in popish Churches, are on some extraordinary Occasions, made by Priestcraft to appear to the People as if they wept, and shed fresh Blood, and moved, and uttered such and such Words; the People may be verily persuaded that it is a Miracle wrought by Christ himself; and from thence may be confident there is a Christ, and that what they are told of his Death and Sufferings, and Resurrection, and Ascension, and present Government of the World is true; for they may look upon this Miracle, as a certain Evidence of all these

Things, and a Kind of ocular Demonstration of them. This may be the Influence of these lying Wonders for the present; though the general Tendency of them is not to convince that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, but finally to promote Atheism. Even the Intercourse which **Satan** has with Witches, and their often experiencing his immediate Power, has a Tendency to convince them of the Truth of some of the Doctrines of Religion; as particularly the Reality of an invisible World, or World of Spirits, contrary to the Doctrine of the **Sadducees**. The general Tendency of **Satan's** Influences is Delusion: But yet he may mix some Truth with his Lies, that his Lies may not be so easily discovered.

There are multitudes that are deluded with a counterfeit Faith, from Impressions on their Imagination, in the Manner which has been now spoken of. They say they know that there is a God, for they have seen him; they know that Christ is the Son of God, for they have seen him in his Glory; they know that Christ died for Sinners, for they have seen him hanging on the Cross, and his Blood running from his Wounds; they know there is a Heaven and a Hell, for they have seen the Misery of the damned Souls in Hell, and the Glory of Saints and Angels in Heaven, (meaning some external Representations, strongly impressed on their Imagination;) they know that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and that such and such Promises in particular, are his Word, for they have heard him speak them to them, they came to their Minds suddenly and immediately from God, without their having any Hand in it.

3. Persons may seem to have their Belief of the Truth of the Things of Religion greatly increased, when the Foundation of it is only a Persuasion they have received, of their Interest in them. They first, by some Means or other, take up a Confidence that, if

there be a Christ and Heaven, they are theirs; and this prejudices them more in favour of the Truth of them. When they hear of the great and glorious Things of Religion, it is with this Notion, that all these Things belong to them; and hence easily become confident that they are true: They look upon it to be greatly for their Interest that they should be true. It is very obvious what a strong Influence Men's Interest and Inclinations have on their Judgments. While a natural Man thinks that, if there be a Heaven and Hell; the Latter, and not the Former, belongs to him; then he will be hardly persuaded that there is a Heaven or Hell: But when he comes to be persuaded, that Hell belongs only to other Folks, and not to him; then he can easily allow the Reality of Hell, and cry out of others Senselessness and Sottishness in neglecting Means of Escape from it: And being confident that he is a Child of God, and that God has promised Heaven to him, he may seem strong in the Faith of its Reality, and may have a great Zeal against that Infidelity which denies it.

But I proceed to another distinguishing Sign of gracious Affections.

6. Gracious Affections are attended with **evangelical Humiliation**.

Evangelical Humiliation is a Sense that a Christian has of his own utter Insufficiency, Despicableness, and Odiousness, with an answerable Frame of Heart.

There is a Distinction to be made between a **legal** and **evangelical** Humiliation. The Former is what Men may be the Subjects of, while they are yet in a State of Nature, and have no gracious Affection; the Latter is peculiar to true Saints: The Former is from

the common Influence of the Spirit of God, assisting natural Principles, and especially natural Conscience; the Latter is from the special Influences of the Spirit of God, implanting and exercising supernatural and divine Principles: The Former is from the Mind's being assisted to a greater Sense of the Things of Religion, as to their natural Properties and Qualities, and particularly of the natural Perfections of God, such as his Greatness, terrible Majesty, **et cetera** which were manifested to the Congregation of **Israel**, in giving the Law at Mount **Sinai**; the Latter is from a Sense of the transcendent Beauty of divine Things in their moral Qualities: In the Former a Sense of the awful Greatness, and natural Perfections of God, and of the Strictness of his Law, convinces Men that they are exceeding sinful, and guilty, and exposed to the Wrath of God, as it will wicked Men and Devils at the Day of Judgment; but they do not see their own **Odiousness** on the Account of Sin; they do not see the hateful Nature of Sin; a Sense of this is given in **evangelical Humiliation**, by a Discovery of the Beauty of God's Holiness and moral Perfection. In a **legal Humiliation**, Men are made sensible that they are little and nothing before the great and terrible God, and that they are undone, and wholly insufficient to help themselves; as wicked Men will be at the Day of Judgment: But they have not **an answerable Frame of Heart**, consisting in a Disposition to abase themselves, and exalt God alone: This Disposition is given only in evangelical Humiliation, by overcoming the Heart, and changing its Inclination, by a Discovery of God's holy Beauty: In a legal Humiliation, the Conscience is convinced; as the Consciences of all will be most perfectly at the Day of Judgment: but because there is no spiritual Understanding, the Will is not bowed, nor the Inclination altered: This is done only in

evangelical Humiliation. In legal Humiliation Men are brought to despair of helping themselves; in Evangelical, they are brought voluntarily to deny and renounce themselves: In the Former they are subdued and forced to the Ground; in the Latter, they are brought sweetly to yield, and freely and with Delight to prostrate themselves at the Feet of God.

Legal Humiliation has in it no spiritual Good, nothing of the Nature of true Virtue; whereas evangelical Humiliation is that wherein the excellent Beauty of christian Grace does very much consist. Legal Humiliation is useful, as a Means in order to Evangelical; as a common Knowledge of the Things of Religion is a Means requisite in order to spiritual Knowledge. Men may be legally humbled and have no **Humility**; as the Wicked at the Day of Judgment will be thoroughly convinced that they have no Righteousness, but are altogether sinful, and exceeding guilty, and justly exposed to eternal Damnation, and be fully sensible of their own Helplessness, without the least Mortification of the Pride of their Hearts: But the Essence of evangelical Humiliation consists in such **Humility**, as becomes a Creature, in itself exceeding sinful, under a Dispensation of Grace; consisting in a mean Esteem of himself, as in himself nothing, and altogether contemptible and odious; attended with a Mortification of a Disposition to exalt himself, and a free Renunciation of his own Glory.

This is a great and most essential thing in true religion. The whole frame of the Gospel, and everything appertaining to the new Covenant, and all God's dispensations towards fallen man, are calculated to bring to pass this effect in the hearts of men. They that are destitute of this, have no true religion, whatever profession they may make, and how high soever their religious affections may

be; Habakkuk 2:4. **Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith: that is** He shall live by his faith on God's righteousness and grace, and not his own goodness and excellency. God has abundantly manifested in his word, that this is what he has a peculiar respect to in his saints, and that nothing is acceptable to him without it; Psalm 34:18. **The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.** Psalm 51:17. **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.** Psalm 138:6. **Though the Lord be high, he hath respect unto the lowly,** Proverbs 3:34. **He giveth grace unto the lowly.** Isaiah 57:15. **Thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.** Isaiah 66:1, 2. **Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool:—But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.** Micah 6:8. **He hath showed you, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord your God require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?** Matthew 5:3. **Blessed are the poor in spirit: For theirs is the kingdom of God.** Matthew 18:3, 4. **Verily I say unto you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.** Mark

10:15. **Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.** The **centurion**, that we have an account of **Luke 7**, acknowledged that **he was not worthy that Christ should enter under his roof**, and that **he was not worthy to come to him**. See the manner of the woman's coming to Christ that was a sinner, **Luke 7:37**, etcetera. **And behold a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head.** She did not think the hair of her head, which is the natural crown and glory of a woman, (**1 Corinthians 11:15**) too good to wipe the feet of Christ withal. Jesus most graciously accepted her, and says to her, **Your faith hath saved you, go in peace.** The woman of **Canaan** submitted to Christ, in his saying, **It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs**, and did as it were own that she was worthy to be called a dog, whereupon Christ says unto her, **O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you, even as you will.** **Matthew 15:26, 27.** The **prodigal son** said, **I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants**, **Luke 15:18**, etcetera. See also **Luke 18:9**, etcetera. **And he spoke this parable unto certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others**, etcetera. —The publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, **God be merci-**

ful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other: For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Matthew 28:9. And they came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Colossians 3:12. Put you on, as the elect of God, —Humbleness of mind. Ezekiel 20:41, 43. I will accept you with your sweet savor, when I bring you out from the people, etcetera. —And there shall you remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein you have been defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that you have committed. Chapter 36:26, 27, 31. A new heart also will I give unto you, —and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, etcetera. —Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations. Chapter 16:63. That you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more, because of your shame; when I am pacified toward you, for all that you have done, saith the Lord. Job 42:6. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

As we would therefore make the holy Scriptures our rule, in judging of the nature of true religion, and judging of our own religious qualifications and state; it concerns us greatly to look at this humiliation, as one of the most essential things pertaining to true Christianity. This is the principal part of the great Christian duty of **Self-denial**: That duty consists in two things, **namely First**, In a man's denying his worldly inclinations, and in forsaking and re-

nouncing all worldly objects and enjoyments; and **Secondly**, In denying his natural self-exaltation, and renouncing his own dignity and glory, and in being emptied of himself; so that he does freely, and from his very heart, as it were renounce himself, and annihilate himself. Thus the Christian does, in evangelical humiliation. And this latter is the greatest and most difficult part of self-denial: Although they always go together, and one never truly is, where the other is not; yet natural men can come much nearer to the former than the latter. Many **Anchorites** and **Recluses** have abandoned (though without any true mortification) the wealth, and pleasures, and common enjoyments of the world, who were far from renouncing their own dignity and righteousness; they never denied themselves for Christ, but only sold one lust to feed another, sold a beastly lust to pamper a devilish one; and so were never the better, but their latter end was worse than their beginning; they turned out one black devil, to let in seven white ones, that were worse than the first, though of a fairer countenance. It is inexpressible, and almost inconceivable, how strong a self-righteous, self-exalting disposition is naturally in man; and what he will not do and suffer, to feed and gratify it; and what lengths have been gone in a seeming self-denial in other respects, by **Essenes** and **Pharisees** among the **Jews**, and by **Papists**, many sects of heretics, and enthusiasts, among professing Christians; and by many **Mahometans**; and by **Pythagorean** philosophers, and others, among the heathen: And all to do sacrifice to this **Moloch** of spiritual pride or self-righteousness; and that they may have something wherein to exalt themselves before God, and above their fellow-creatures.

That humiliation which has been spoken of, is what all the most glorious hypocrites, who make the most splendid show of mortification to the world, and high religious affection, do grossly fail in. Were it not that this is so much insisted on in scripture, as a most essential thing in true grace; one would be tempted to think that many of the heathen philosophers were truly gracious, in whom was so bright an appearance of many virtues, and also great illuminations, and inward fervors and elevations of mind, as though they were truly the subjects of divine illapses and heavenly communications.

It is true that many hypocrites make great pretenses to humility, as well as other graces; and very often there is nothing whatsoever which they make a higher profession of. They endeavor to make a great show of humility in speech and behavior; but they commonly make bungling work of it; though glorious work in their own eyes. They can't find out what a humble speech and behavior is, or how to speak and act so that there may indeed be a savor of Christian humility in what they say and do: That sweet humble air and mien is beyond their art, being not **led by the Spirit**, or naturally guided to a behavior becoming holy humility, by the vigor of a lowly spirit within them. And therefore they have no other way, many of them, but only to be much in declaring that they be humble, and telling how they were humbled to the dust at such and such times, and abounding in very bad expressions which they use about themselves; such as, **I am the least of all saints, I am a poor vile creature, I am not worthy of the least mercy, or that God should look upon me! Oh, I have a dreadful wicked heart! my heart is worse than the devil! Oh, this cursed heart of mine**, etcetera. Such expressions are very often

used, not with a heart that is broken, not with spiritual mourning, not with the tears of her that washed Jesus's feet with her tears, not as **remembering and being confounded, and never opening their mouth more, because of their shame, when God is pacified**, as the expression is, Ezekiel 16:63. But with a light air, with smiles in the countenance, or with a pharisaical affectation: And we must believe that they are thus humble, and make themselves so vile, upon the credit of their **Say so**; for there is nothing appears in them of any savor or humility, in the manner of their deportment and deeds that they do. There are many that are full of expressions of their own vileness, who yet expect to be looked upon as eminent and bright saints by others, as their due; and it is dangerous for any, so much as to hint the contrary, or to carry it towards them any otherwise, than as if we looked upon them some of the chief of Christians. There are many that are much in crying out of their wicked hearts, and then great shortcomings, and unprofitableness, and speaking as though they looked on themselves as the meanest of the saints; who yet, if a minister should seriously tell them the same things in private, and should signify, that he feared they were very low and weak Christians, and thought they had reason solemnly to consider of their great barrenness, and unprofitableness, and falling so much short of many others; it would be more than they could digest: they would think themselves highly injured; and there would be danger of a rooted prejudice in them against such a minister.

THANKS FOR READING



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