

MARKS OF A WORK
OF THE SPIRIT OF
GOD APPLIED



JONATHAN EDWARDS

MARKS OF A WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD APPLIED

Jonathan Edwards



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In this seminal treatise, one of history's greatest theologians provides a **definitive guide to spiritual discernment**. Written amidst the religious fervor of the Great Awakening, the work establishes **biblical criteria** for distinguishing genuine movements of the Holy Spirit from mere emotionalism or deception. By identifying "distinguishing marks"—including a heightened esteem for Christ and a deeper love for truth—the text offers a **timeless framework** for evaluating revival. This profound analysis remains an essential resource for scholars and seekers alike, championing **authentic faith** and theological clarity in an age of religious uncertainty.



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TITLE PAGE



The distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God.

Applied to that remarkable operation that has recently appeared on the minds of many people in this land:

With a particular consideration of the extraordinary circumstances attending this work.

A discourse delivered at New Haven, September tenth, 1741. It was delivered the day after commencement, and is now published at the earnest request of many ministers and other gentlemen who heard it, with significant additions.

By Jonathan Edwards, Master of Arts, Pastor of the Church of Christ at Northampton.

With a preface by the Reverend Mr. Cooper of Boston.

John 10:4-5 And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice; and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

Boston: Printed and sold by S. Kneeland and T. Green, in Queen Street, over against the prison. 1741.

TO THE READER



From the beginning of time, God has worked through several different dispensations, or eras of grace, within His church.

There was the era of the ancient patriarchs, the era of the Law of Moses, and now the era of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, under which we now live. This is the brightest era that has ever shone, surpassing the others in its unique advantages. To us who are blessed to live under the gospel dispensation, these words of our Savior may be directed — words He spoke to His disciples when He was first establishing the Messiah's kingdom in the world, and gospel light and power began to spread: Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which you hear, and have not heard them.

The Mosaic dispensation, though shrouded in types and figures, far exceeded what came before it. But the gospel dispensation exceeds it in glory so greatly that it eclipses the old covenant, just as the stars disappear when the sun rises and goes forth in its strength. The chief thing that makes the gospel so glorious is that it is the ministration of the Spirit. Under its preaching, the Holy Spirit was to be poured out in far greater measure — not only

through miraculous gifts, as in the early days of the gospel, but through His inward, saving work alongside the outward ministry, producing many conversions to Christ, giving spiritual life to souls that were dead in sin, and preparing them for eternal life. This is what the apostle means when he draws a comparison between the old testament and the new, between the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus Christ: For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stone, was glorious — so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, a glory that was fading — how much more glorious will the ministration of the Spirit be?

This blessed time of the gospel has several other names, which should raise our esteem and appreciation for it. The prophet Isaiah calls it the acceptable year of the Lord. Or, as it may be translated, the year of good pleasure, or of benevolence, or of the good will of the Lord — because it would be the special period in which He would display His grace and favor in an extraordinary way, and pour out spiritual blessings with a full and generous hand. Our Savior also calls it the regeneration — which may refer not only to the glorious restoration of all things looked for at the close of the Christian age, but also to the renewing work of grace in individual souls, carried on from the beginning to the end of that era.

But few were renewed and sanctified under the former dispensations, compared with the instances of God's grace in gospel times. Such numbers were brought into the gospel church when it was first established that they gave occasion for that wondering question — which was itself a prophecy — Who are these that fly as a cloud? And as the doves to their windows? Then the power of the

divine Spirit so accompanied the ministry of the word that thousands were converted under a single sermon. But despite this great outpouring of the Spirit when gospel light first dawned on the world, and that pleasant spring of religion that then appeared across the earth, there was a gradual withdrawal of His saving light and influence, and so the gospel became less fruitful, and Christianity withered in one place and another.

At the time of the Reformation from Popery, when gospel light broke into the church and scattered the clouds of anti-Christian darkness that had covered it, the power of divine grace so accompanied the preaching of the word that it had remarkable success in converting and building up souls, and its blessed fruit appeared in the hearts and lives of those who professed it. That was one of the days of the Son of Man, in which the exalted Redeemer rode forth in His glory and majesty on the white horse of the pure gospel, conquering and to conquer; and the bow in His hand, like that of Jonathan's, did not return empty.

But what a dead and barren time it has been for so long among all the churches of the Reformation. The golden showers have been withheld, the influences of the Spirit suspended, and as a result the gospel has had no remarkable success. Conversions have been rare and uncertain; few sons and daughters have been born to God; and the hearts of Christians have not been quickened, warmed, and refreshed under the ordinances as they once were.

That this has been the sad state of religion in this land for many years — except in one or two distinguished places that were occasionally visited with a shower of mercy while other towns and churches received none — will be acknowledged by all who have their spiritual senses exercised, as it has been lamented by faithful

ministers and serious Christians. Accordingly it has been a constant petition in our public prayers from Sabbath to Sabbath: that God would pour out His Spirit upon us, and revive His work in the midst of the years. And beyond our annual fast days appointed by the government, most of our churches have set apart days to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting, that He would come and rain down righteousness upon us.

And now — behold! The Lord whom we have sought has suddenly come to His temple. The dispensation of grace we are now under is certainly unlike anything we or our fathers have seen; and in some ways so remarkable that I believe there has been nothing like it since the extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit immediately after our Lord's ascension. The apostolic times seem to have returned upon us — such a display has there been of the power and grace of the divine Spirit in the assemblies of His people, and such testimony has He given to the word of the gospel.

I recall a remarkable passage from the late Reverend and learned Mr. How, which I think is worth including here. It comes from his discourse on the prosperous state of the Christian church before the end of time, through a plentiful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, page 80. In such a time, he says, when the Spirit shall be poured out abundantly, ministers will surely receive their proportionate share. And when such a time comes, I believe you will hear sermons of a very different kind than you are used to nowadays — or those who live to see that time will. Souls will certainly be dealt with at a very different level. It is plain, he says, too sadly plain, that there is a great withdrawal of the Spirit of God even from us. We do not know how to speak living sense into souls, or how to reach you. Our words die in our mouths, or drop and die in the

space between you and us. We even faint when we speak. Long-experienced failure makes us despair; we speak without the expectation of prevailing, without hope of making you serious, heavenly-minded, mindful of God, or living more like Christians. The methods of drawing and convincing souls, which some of us have known, have largely been lost among us. There have been other ways once used to soften the hardened, awaken the complacent, convince and persuade the stubborn, and win back the disaffected — ways we can no longer find. Surely ministers will receive a large share when such an outpouring of the Spirit comes as is expected — they will know how to speak with greater purpose, with more compassion, more seriousness, more authority, and more persuasion than we now find we can. Thus he.

In keeping with the just expectation of this great and excellent man, we have found it in this remarkable day. A number of preachers have appeared among us to whom God has given such a large measure of His Spirit that we are sometimes ready to apply to them the description given of Barnabas — that he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith. They preach the gospel of the grace of God from place to place with uncommon zeal and diligence. The doctrines they emphasize are the doctrines of the Reformation, under the influence of which the power of godliness flourished so greatly in the last century. The points on which their preaching mainly turns are the important ones of man's guilt, corruption, and helplessness; supernatural regeneration by the Spirit of God; and free justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ; and the marks of the new birth. Their manner of preaching is not with the enticing words of human wisdom — yet they speak wisdom among those who are mature. An ardent love to Christ and

souls warms their hearts and drives their labors. God has made these ministers active spirits, a flame of fire in His service; and His word in their mouths has been like a fire, and like a hammer that breaks rock in pieces. In most places where they have labored, God has evidently worked with them and confirmed the word by signs that followed. Such a power and presence of God in religious assemblies has not been known since God first set up His sanctuary among us; He has indeed glorified the house of His glory.

This work is truly extraordinary in its extent. It is spreading, more or less, across several provinces spanning many hundreds of miles on this continent. He sends forth His word and it runs very swiftly. It has entered and spread in some of the most populated towns — the chief centers of commerce and activity. And, blessed be God, it has visited the seats of learning, both here and in a neighboring colony. May the Holy Spirit constantly dwell in them both, seize our devoted youth, and shape them as polished instruments to fight the Lord's battles against the powers of darkness when they are called into service.

The work is also extraordinary in the number of people affected by it. Spiritually hardened sinners have been awakened by the hundreds; and the question has been common in some places: What must I do to be saved? I truly believe that here in our own city, last winter, there were some thousands under religious impressions they had never felt before.

The work has also been remarkable for the wide variety of people it has touched. It has reached people of all ages. Some elderly people have been snatched as brands from the fire — made monuments of divine mercy and born to God, though, as the apostle says of his own case, out of due time. But here among us, it has fallen

mostly on the young. Energetic young people have been made to bow like willows to the Redeemer's scepter and willingly surrender themselves to the Lord. And out of the mouths of babes — even some small children — God has ordained praise for Himself, to silence the enemy and the avenger. It has reached people of all ranks and degrees. Some of the great and wealthy, but more of the lowly and poor. It has reached people of other countries and nations. Ethiopia has stretched out her hand. Some poor Negroes have, I trust, been welcomed into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It has reached people of all qualities and conditions. The most ignorant — the foolish things of the world, those with little knowledge — have been made wise unto salvation, taught those heavenly truths which have been hidden from the wise and educated. Some of the learned and knowledgeable among men have had those things revealed to them by the Father in heaven that flesh and blood cannot teach. Among these, some who had adopted the modern fashionable opinions and held nothing more than the polite religion of the present times, have had their prejudices overcome, their worldly reasoning broken down, and their understandings made to bow to gospel mysteries. They now receive the truth as it is in Jesus, and their faith no longer stands in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Some of the most rough and disorderly have become orderly in their behavior and sober in all things. The lighthearted and carefree have become serious and thoughtful. Some of the greatest sinners have appeared to be turned into true saints. Drunkards have become temperate. The sexually immoral have become chaste; swearers and profane persons have learned to fear that glorious and awesome name, the Lord their God; and those consumed by the world have been made

to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Even mockers and scoffers of this work and its instruments have come under its conquering power. Some of this kind, who came to hear the preacher as some came to Paul — What will this babbler say? — were unable to resist the power and the Spirit with which he spoke. They sat trembling under the word, went away weeping, and afterward clung to the preacher, as Dionysius the Areopagite did to Paul. Several such instances have come to my personal knowledge. The virtuous and well-behaved have been convinced that morality alone cannot be relied on for eternal life, and have been stirred to seek the new birth and a vital union to Jesus Christ by faith. Likewise, the formal professor has been awakened out of his dead formalities and brought under the power of godliness, led away from his false hopes and brought to build entirely on the Mediator's righteousness. At the same time, many of God's children have been greatly refreshed and renewed. They have been awakened out of the sluggish states they had fallen into and stirred to make their calling and election sure; and they have had precious seasons of revival and assurance. So extensive and widespread has the divine influence been in this glorious season.

One more thing is worthy of note: the uniformity of the work. From accounts I have received in letters, and from conversations with ministers and others who live in different parts of the land where this work is going on, it is the same work being carried on from one place to another. The Spirit's manner of working on people's minds is the same, though with some variation in circumstances as is usual at other times. The particular features that accompany this work, features not as common at other times, are also much the same. Many object to these features. But though

conversion is the same work in its essential outlines wherever it is wrought, it seems reasonable to suppose that in an extraordinary season — in which God is pleased to carry on His work of grace in a more visible and glorious manner, in a way He intends the world to take notice of — there may be some particular features in the work of conversion that are not common at other times, even when true conversions are also occurring. Certain circumstances accompanying the work may be carried to an unusual degree and height. If it were not so, the work of the Lord would not attract so much attention, and so God would not receive as much of the glory from it. Nor would the work itself spread as quickly, for God has evidently made use of example and conversation in carrying it forward.

And as for the fruits of this work — which we have so often been told to wait for — blessed be God! So far as there has been time to observe, they appear to be lasting. I do not mean that no one has lost their early impressions, or that there are no instances of hypocrisy and falling away. Scripture and experience lead us to expect these things in such a season. It is in fact a matter of surprise and thankfulness to me that there have not been more. What I mean is that a great number of those who were awakened are still seeking and striving to enter through the narrow gate. Most of those who appear to have been converted continue to give evidence of being new creatures, and seem to cling to the Lord with full purpose of heart. Certainly a new face of things continues in this town, though many circumstances make such a work less visible here than in smaller and more distant places. Many things unbecoming a gospel profession have been, in a measure, corrected. Taverns, dancing-schools, and those gatherings called assemblies — which

have always proven unfriendly to serious godliness — are much less frequented. Many have reduced their dress and appearance, making themselves look more like followers of the humble Jesus. It has been both surprising and pleasing to see how some younger people — especially those of the sex most fond of such vanities — have set aside their outward finery as an expression and sign of their seeking the inward glories of the King's daughter. Religion is now far more the subject of conversation at friends' homes than I have ever known. The doctrines of grace are embraced and cherished. Private religious meetings have greatly multiplied. Public assemblies, especially weekday lectures, are much better attended. Our congregations have never been so attentive and serious. There is indeed an extraordinary appetite for the sincere milk of the word.

More than a year ago, an evening lecture was established in this town; there are now several, with two held regularly on Tuesday and Friday evenings. Some of our largest homes are well filled with hearers who, by their looks and manner, seem to come that their souls might live. An evening in God's courts is now counted better than many spent elsewhere. There is also great private resort to ministers. Our hands are continually full of work. Often we have more people seeking us than we can speak with individually and at length.

I have been this detailed and specific so that people at a distance who wish to know the present state of religion here — into whose hands these pages will come — may receive some satisfaction.

And now, can anyone be at a loss as to what spirit to attribute this work? To attribute it, as some do, to the Devil is to make the old serpent behave like the foolish woman who tears down her own house with her hands. Our Savior has taught us to reason differently in such a case. Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself — how then shall his kingdom stand?

That some hold prejudices against this work, and that others revile and reproach it, does not make it look less like a work of God. If anything, it would be suspicious if it did not draw opposition, for the spirit of this world and the Spirit that is of God are opposed to one another. I am not surprised that Satan rages and shows his rage through some who are under his influence, when his kingdom is so shaken and his subjects are deserting him by hundreds — I hope by thousands.

The prejudices of some, I have no doubt, stem from lack of opportunity to be properly informed, and from having received misrepresentations from others. Others may be offended because they have experienced nothing like this work in themselves; and if these things are true, they must start over and build on a different foundation than the one they have been building on — and that is something people are very reluctant to do. Others perhaps dislike the present work because it supports and confirms certain principles they have not yet embraced, principles against which their minds are deeply prejudiced and cannot easily shake free — for it is certain that these fruits do not grow on Arminian ground. I hope

none dislike the work because they have not been used as instruments in it — for if we love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, we will rejoice to see Him increase, even though we should decrease.

Those who are firmly set against this work — who intend to disbelieve it, reproach it, and oppose it — must be left to the free and sovereign power and mercy of God to enlighten and rescue them. I am inclined to think that these people, had they had opportunity to be properly informed, would have been disbelievers and opponents of the miracles and mission of our Savior had they lived in His day. The hostility that some of them have shown comes close, in my view, to the unpardonable sin; and they need to beware lest they indeed commit the sin that leads to death. For I believe it can be committed in these days just as in the days of the apostles, and I think people are now in greater danger of committing it than at other times. I hope these words have come from my pen not in an intemperate zeal, but with due caution and appropriate solemnity of spirit. At the very least, let them come under the weight of that word, Psalm 28:5: Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up.

But if anyone is disposed to receive conviction — if they have a mind open to light and are genuinely willing to know whether this present work is of God — it is with great satisfaction and pleasure that I recommend to them the following pages. In them they will find the distinguishing marks of such a work as they are found in the Holy Scriptures, applied to the uncommon operation that has been on the minds of many in this land. Here the matter is tested

by the infallible standard of the holy Scriptures, and is weighed in the balances of the sanctuary with great judgment and impartiality.

A work of this kind is timely and necessary, and I heartily thank God who inclined this servant of His to undertake it and has graciously assisted him in the effort. The reverend author is known to be a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. The church where he has been called to minister has been well known for genuine religious experience, and he has had opportunity to observe this work in many places where it has appeared with power, and to speak personally with many who have been the subjects of it. These things qualify him for this undertaking above most. His arguments in favor of the work are drawn firmly from Scripture, reason, and experience. I believe every honest and discerning reader will say that he writes very free from an enthusiastic or partisan spirit. The value of human learning is affirmed. An orderly and prepared manner of preaching — the fruit of both study and prayer — is recommended. The exercise of charity in judging others is pressed and urged. And those things that are considered the flaws and likely hindrances of the work are warned against with great faithfulness. Many, I believe, will be thankful for this publication. Those who have already looked favorably on this work will be confirmed by it, and those who are uncertain may be convinced and satisfied. But if there are any who still cannot see the marks of a divine hand on the work, it is to be hoped they will at least be persuaded to hold their criticism and stop their opposition, lest perhaps they be found to fight against God.

I still had several things to say, but I see I must leave them out, or I will go far beyond the proper length of a preface. I fear I must ask pardon, both of the reader and the publishers, for the length I have already run. Only I cannot help expressing my wish that those who have been present in this work in one place and another would send accounts of it to such a hand as the reverend author of this discourse, to be compiled into a narrative — like the account of the conversions at Northampton published a few years ago. That way the world might know this remarkable dispensation in its beginning, progress, and various circumstances. I believe this would honor the Holy Spirit, whose work and office has been so reproachfully treated in the Christian world. It would be an open testimony to the divinity of a despised gospel. And it might have a happy effect on other places where news of this marvelous work would by this means be heard. I cannot but think it would be one of the most useful pieces of church history that the people of God have been given. Perhaps it would come closer to the Acts of the Apostles than anything else available; and all the histories in the world do not reach that level. There we find something as remarkable as anything in Genesis; and a new creation of another kind seems to open before our view. But I must forbear.

I will only add my prayer that the worthy author of this discourse may long be continued as a burning and shining light in the golden candlestick where Christ has placed him, and from there may spread his light through these provinces. May the divine Spirit, whose cause is here championed, accompany this and the other valuable publications of His servant with His powerful influ-

ence — that they may advance the Redeemer's interest, serve the ends of vital religion, and so add to the author's present joy and future crown.

Boston, November 20, 1741. William Cooper.

THE MARKS OF A WORK OF THE TRUE SPIRIT



1 John 4:1_ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false — prophets have gone out into the world.

The apostolic age — the age in which the apostles lived and preached the gospel — was an age of the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God that had ever occurred. This was true both in the extraordinary influences and gifts of the Spirit, in inspiration and miracles, and also in His ordinary work of convincing, converting, enlightening, and sanctifying the souls of people. But as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so did counterfeits. The Devil was active in mimicking both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God, as is evident from countless passages in the apostles' writings. This made it vitally necessary that the church of Christ be given certain clear and distinguishing marks by which she could safely judge spirits and tell the true from the false, without danger of being deceived. Providing such marks is the plain purpose of this chapter, where this matter is more expressly and fully handled than anywhere else in the Bible. The apostle here, with deliberate intent, undertakes to supply the church of

God with marks of the true Spirit that are plain, safe, clearly distinguishing, and well suited to practical use. To make the subject clear and complete, he develops it throughout the whole chapter — which makes it all the more remarkable that what is said in this chapter receives so little attention in this extraordinary day, when such an uncommon operation on the minds of people has appeared, so extensive in its reach, and there is such a variety of opinions about it, and so much talk about the work of the Spirit.

The apostle is led to address this subject by a passing reference to the indwelling of the Spirit as the sure evidence of union with Christ, in the last verse of the preceding chapter. And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him; and by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us. From this we may gather that the apostle's purpose in this chapter is not only to give marks for distinguishing the true Spirit from the false in His extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles, but also in His ordinary working on the minds of His people in order to unite them to Christ and build them up in Him. This is also evident from the marks themselves that are given, which we will note as we go.

The words of the text serve as an introduction to this discussion of the distinguishing signs of the true and false spirit. Before the apostle proceeds to lay down these signs, he urges the Christians he is writing to, to be careful in this matter. First, he presses the duty of testing the spirits, with a caution against excessive credulity and eagerness to accept everything as a mark of the true Spirit simply because it has that appearance or claim: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. Second, the necessity of this duty is

shown by the fact that there were many counterfeits: because many false prophets have gone out into the world. The false apostles and false prophets of those days not only claimed to possess the Spirit of God in His extraordinary gift of inspiration, but also claimed to be great friends and servants of heaven, eminently holy persons possessing much of the ordinary, saving, sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God in their hearts. We should understand these words as a direction to examine and test their claims to the Spirit of God in both of these areas.

After thus counseling and warning the Christians he wrote to concerning the testing of spirits, the apostle immediately proceeds to give them rules by which they may safely evaluate anything claiming to be either the ordinary or extraordinary work of the Spirit of God.

My purpose at this time, therefore, is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God — by which we may safely judge any operation we find in ourselves or observe in others.

Here I would observe that we must take the Scriptures as our guide in such matters. This is the great, standing rule God has given to His church to guide them in all things relating to the vital concerns of their souls, and it is an infallible and sufficient rule. There are undoubtedly sufficient marks given in Scripture to guide the church of God in the important task of judging spirits. Without such guidance the church would lie open to terrible delusion and be helplessly exposed to being deceived and destroyed by its enemies. Whatever rules we find in the holy Scriptures for this purpose, we need not be afraid to trust them. Certainly the Spirit who

inspired the Scriptures knew how to give us reliable rules by which to distinguish His operations from everything that is falsely claimed to come from Him.

As I observed, the Spirit of God has done this deliberately in the chapter containing my text, and has done it more particularly and fully there than anywhere else. So in my present discourse I will go nowhere else for rules or marks for the testing of spirits, but will confine myself to those I find here.

Before I proceed to these specifically, I want to clear the way by first observing — negatively, in several instances — what are not signs by which we should judge a work, whether it be the work of the Spirit of God or not. In particular, I will address what are not evidences that a work carried on among a people is not the work of the Spirit of God.

First, nothing certain can be concluded from the fact that a work is carried on in a very unusual and extraordinary way. It is no sign that a work is not the work of the Spirit of God if it is carried on in a manner different from how the same Spirit has worked in the past — provided the difference falls within the limits of the rules Scripture gives for distinguishing a work of the Spirit of God. What we or the church of God have been accustomed to is not the standard by which we are to judge whether a work is from God, because there may be new and extraordinary works of God. God has worked in extraordinary ways before; He has brought about things that were new and strange, working in ways that surprised both men and angels. As God has done this in the past, we have no reason to think He will not do so again. The prophecies of Scripture give us reason to believe that God still has new things to accomplish — things that have never yet been seen. No departure from

what has previously been usual, however great, is an argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, if it is no departure from the rule God has given for judging a work of His Spirit. The Spirit of God is sovereign in His operations; we know that He uses great variety, and we cannot know how great a variety He may use within the compass of the rules He has set. We should not limit God where He has not limited Himself. If a work differs greatly from what has been seen before from God's Spirit, yet still agrees with the distinguishing signs God's word has given for a work of His Spirit, that agreement is entirely sufficient for us to embrace it.

Therefore it is not reasonable to conclude that a work is not from the Spirit of God simply because of the extraordinary degree to which people's minds are influenced and affected. If they appear to have an extraordinary sense of the dreadful nature of sin, an unusual awareness of the misery of a Christless condition, or seem to have exceptional views of the certainty and glory of divine things — and if, flowing from these impressions, they are proportionally moved by very strong emotions of fear, sorrow, desire, love, or joy — that does not disprove the work. Likewise, if the change in people seems very sudden, if the work on their minds appears to move with unusual speed, if those so strangely affected are very numerous, many of them very young, or if the work is unusual in many other circumstances that do not violate Scripture's marks of a work of the Spirit — none of these things are evidence that the work is not from the Spirit of God.

An extraordinary degree of influence and power, if its nature agrees with the rules and marks given in Scripture, is actually an argument in its favor. The higher the degree of what is in its nature agreeable to the rule, the greater the conformity to the rule, and

the more evident and clear that conformity becomes. When things appear in small degrees, even when they genuinely agree with the rule, their nature is harder to discern and it is not as easy to see whether they agree with the rule or not.

People are naturally prone to doubt things that are strange. Elderly people especially — those who have lived long in the world — find it difficult to accept as right something they have never seen in their own day, or heard of in the days of their fathers. But if it were a good argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God simply because it is very unusual, then it always was so — including in the days of the apostles. The work of the Spirit of God in that era was carried on in ways that were, in very many respects, entirely new. There were things then that the Jews of that generation, and their fathers before them, had never seen or heard of — things that had never occurred since the world began. The work was then carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever before; never had there been seen such mighty and wonderful effects of the Spirit of God — such sudden changes, such intense engagement and zeal in such multitudes, such a swift and sweeping transformation of towns, cities, and entire regions, such rapid progress and vast extent. The striking unusualness of the work surprised the Jews; they did not know what to make of it and could not believe it to be the work of God. Many looked upon those who were the subjects of it as out of their minds, as you can see in Acts 2:13 and 26:24 and 1 Corinthians 4:10.

And we have reason from Scripture prophecy to expect that when the last and greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God comes — the one prophesied for the latter ages of the world — the manner of the work will be very extraordinary, unlike anything ever seen be-

fore. There will then be occasion to say, as in Isaiah 66:8: Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. It may reasonably be expected that the extraordinary manner of that work will in some proportion match the very extraordinary events and the glorious change in the state of the world that God will be bringing about through it.

2. A work is not to be judged by any effects on the bodies of people — such as tears, trembling, groans, loud crying out, physical agonies, or the loss of bodily strength. Whether the influence on a person's mind is from the Spirit of God or not cannot be determined, one way or the other, by such physical effects. The reason is that Scripture nowhere gives us such a rule. We cannot conclude that people are under the influence of the true Spirit because of such effects on their bodies, since this is not given as a mark of the true Spirit. Nor, on the other hand, does Scripture give us any reason to conclude that people who experience such physical effects are not under the true Spirit. Scripture neither expressly endorses nor excludes such bodily responses. It is easy to understand, from what we know of the nature of divine and eternal things, the nature of man, and the laws of the connection between soul and body, how a right and genuine sense of truth could produce such effects on the body — even those of the most extraordinary kind, such as the loss of bodily strength, throwing the body into great agony, or wringing out loud cries. All of us would readily grant that the misery of hell is so dreadful, and eternity so vast, that if a person had a clear vision of that misery as it truly is, it would be more than his frail constitution could bear — especially if

at the same time he saw himself in great danger of it and had no certainty of being delivered, not even from one day to the next. When we consider human nature, we need not wonder that when people have a very vivid sense of something so overwhelmingly dreadful, and such a clear view of their own wickedness and God's anger, things seem to them to signal swift and immediate destruction. We see that human nature is such that when a person faces some terrible calamity and feels greatly exposed to it, he is ready on the slightest occasion to think it is upon him now. Those who are full of fear in time of war, feeling deeply exposed, tremble at every noise and expect the enemy any minute, saying within themselves: now I will be killed. Suppose a person saw himself hanging over a great pit full of fierce, glowing flames, by a thread he knew to be very weak and incapable of bearing his weight, and knew that multitudes before him had hung in the same situation and most had fallen to their destruction, and saw nothing within reach to take hold of to save himself. What distress would he be in? How ready to think that now the thread is breaking — now this very moment he will be swallowed up in those dreadful flames? And would he not cry out in such circumstances? How much more will those cry out who see themselves hanging in this manner over an infinitely more dreadful pit, or held over it in the hand of God, who they at the same time see to be intensely provoked? No wonder they expect every moment that this angry God will let them drop; no wonder they cry out in their misery; no wonder that God's wrath, when even partially revealed to the soul, overpowers human strength.

Similarly, it is easy to understand how a true sense of the glorious excellence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of His wonderful dying love, and the experience of truly spiritual love and joy, could

very much overcome bodily strength. We all readily acknowledge that no man can see God and live, and that even a very small portion of the apprehension of the glory and love of Christ — far less than the saints in heaven enjoy — is more than our present frame can bear. Therefore it is not at all strange that God should sometimes give His saints such foretastes of heaven as to diminish their bodily strength. If it was not remarkable that the Queen of Sheba fainted and lost her bodily strength when she came to see the glory of Solomon, it is even less remarkable that she who is the antitype of the Queen of Sheba — namely the church, brought as it were from the uttermost ends of the earth, from being an alien and stranger, far off in a state of sin and misery — should faint when she comes to see the glory of Christ, who is the antitype of Solomon; and especially will this be so in that prosperous, peaceful, glorious kingdom He will establish in the world in its latter age.

Some object against such extraordinary physical responses by noting that no examples of them are recorded in the New Testament during the great outpourings of the Spirit that occurred then. Even if that were granted, I see no force in the objection, since neither reason nor any rule of Scripture excludes such things — especially in light of what was observed under the previous point. We do not find in the New Testament any specific mention of persons weeping, groaning, or sighing from fear of hell or a sense of God's anger. But is anyone so unreasonable as to argue from this that whenever such things appear, the convictions producing them are not from the Spirit of God? The reason we do not argue this way is that such responses are easily accounted for from what we know of human nature, and from what the Scriptures tell

us in general about the nature of eternal things and the nature of the Spirit's convicting work. There is no need for Scripture to speak specifically to these outward, incidental effects. No one supposes that express Scripture is required for every outward, circumstantial expression of inward spiritual movement. And though such circumstances are not specifically recorded in sacred history, there is good reason to think, from the general accounts we have, that such things certainly occurred in those days. There is also reason to believe that the great outpouring of the Spirit in that era was not entirely without more extraordinary physical effects. The jailer in particular seems to be an instance of this, when in extreme distress and amazement he came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas. His falling down at that moment does not appear to have been a deliberate act of supplication or humble address to Paul and Silas, for he seems to have said nothing to them at that point. He first brought them out, and then said to them, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* — Acts 16:29-30. His falling down seems to have had the same cause as his trembling. The psalmist also describes his crying out aloud and a great weakening of his body under conviction of conscience and a sense of the guilt of sin, in Psalm 32:3-4: *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night Your hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.* We may at least draw from this that such physical effects of conviction of sin may reasonably be supposed in some cases; for even if there is some degree of heightened expression in the language used, the psalmist would not describe his experience with imagery that bore no relationship to what he actually went through.

We read of the disciples in Matthew 14:26 that when they saw Christ coming to them in the storm and took Him for some terrible enemy threatening their destruction, they cried out for fear. Why then should it be thought strange that people cry out for fear when God appears to them as their terrible enemy, and they see themselves in great danger of being swallowed up in the bottomless pit of eternal misery?

The bride in the Song of Solomon more than once speaks of herself as overcome with the love of Christ, to the point of weakening her body and making her ready to faint. Song of Solomon 2:5: Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love. And Song of Solomon 5:8: I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am sick of love. From this we may at least conclude that such an effect from such a cause may well occur in the saints at times, and that such an effect will sometimes be seen in the church of Christ.

It is a weak objection that enthusiasts under false impressions have often been greatly affected in their bodies. The fact that the Quakers used to tremble is no argument that Saul — afterward Paul — and the jailer did not tremble from real conviction of conscience. Indeed all such objections based on physical effects, whether greater or lesser, seem extremely weak. Those who argue from such things are reasoning in the dark; they do not know what ground they stand on or what rule they are following. The root and cause of things is what must be examined. The nature of the operations and affections that people's minds are under — that is what must be inquired into and tested by the rule of God's Word, not the movements of the blood and animal spirits.

3. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people is not the work of the Spirit of God simply because it occasions great commotion and a great deal of noise about religion. Though true religion is of an entirely different character from the ostentatious religion of the Pharisees, which loved to display itself before others for applause, yet such is human nature that it is morally impossible for there to be deep concern, strong affection, and intense engagement of mind among a large number of people — all agreeing in this together — without its being publicly noticeable. It would be impossible for such a work not to produce a visible, observable, open stir and change among that people.

Surely it is no argument that people's minds are not under the influence of God's Spirit that they are greatly moved. Spiritual and eternal things are so vast and so infinitely important that there is something almost absurd about people being only moderately moved by them. And it is no argument that they are not moved by the Spirit of God that they are affected by these things appropriately — in some measure proportionate to their true importance. And when has there ever been a time, from the beginning of the world, when a large group of people was greatly stirred in any matter whatsoever, without noise or commotion? Human nature does not allow for it.

Indeed, Christ says in Luke 17:20: The kingdom of God does not come with observation. That is, it will not consist in what is outward and visible in the manner of earthly kingdoms — established with outward pomp in some particular place serving as the royal city and seat of government. Christ explains this in the very next words: Neither shall they say, lo here, or lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you. But this does not mean that the

kingdom of God will be established in the world on the ruins of Satan's kingdom without a very striking, observable, and mighty effect — a great change in the state of things, to the astonishment of the whole world. Such an effect is clearly anticipated in Scripture prophecy, and even by Christ Himself in this very passage, in His own explanation of His earlier words, in verse 24: For as the lightning that lights up one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of Man be in His day. This is to distinguish Christ's coming to establish His kingdom from the coming of false Christs, which Christ tells us will happen privately, in the deserts and in the secret chambers. By contrast, the establishment of the kingdom of God will be open and public, in plain sight of the whole world — clear and unmistakable, like lightning that cannot be hidden but blazes in everyone's eyes and flashes from one side of heaven to the other.

And indeed, when Christ's kingdom came through the remarkable outpouring of the Spirit in the apostles' days, it caused a great stir and commotion everywhere. What a mighty opposition arose in Jerusalem on account of that great outpouring of the Spirit! And what great commotion in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth, and other places! The whole affair filled the world with noise, and gave occasion to some to say of the apostles that they had turned the world upside down — Acts 17:6.

4. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people is not the work of the Spirit of God that many who are subjects of it have strong impressions on their imaginations. That people have many impressions on their imaginations does not prove that they have nothing beyond imagination. It is easy to explain why there would be much of this among a large group of all kinds of people

whose minds are intensely engaged and deeply stirred about invisible things. In fact, it would be strange if there were not. Such is our nature that we cannot think about invisible things without exercising imagination. I would challenge any person, of whatever intellectual capacity, to direct his thoughts to God or Christ or the things of another world, without some mental images accompanying his meditation. And the more engaged the mind is, and the more intense the thought and emotion, the more vivid and strong those mental images will ordinarily be — especially when the contemplation and feeling is accompanied by surprise, as when what a person sees is very new and seizes the emotions strongly, whether in fear or joy. This is also especially true when the change of a person's inner state and perspective is sudden and comes from a contrary extreme, as from something overwhelmingly dreadful to something overwhelmingly wonderful and delightful. It is no wonder that many people do not distinguish between what is imaginary and what is intellectual and spiritual, or that they are apt to place too much weight on the imaginative element and are quickest to speak of that when giving an account of their experience — particularly people of less understanding and ability to make such distinctions.

Since God has given us the faculty of imagination, and has made us such that we cannot think about spiritual and invisible things without exercising it, it appears to me that in our present state and nature this faculty genuinely serves and helps the other faculties of the mind when properly used — even though when the imagination is too strong and the other faculties weak, it overrides them and greatly disturbs their exercise. It appears clear to me from many instances I have known that God has genuinely used

this faculty for truly divine purposes — especially in the case of simpler and less educated people. God seems to condescend to their circumstances and deal with them as children — as He once instructed His church during its state of spiritual immaturity through types and outward representations. I see nothing unreasonable in this. Let others who have much to do with souls in spiritual matters judge whether experience does not confirm it.

It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God that some who are subjects of it have, in extraordinary states, experienced something like an ecstasy — being carried beyond themselves and having their minds transported into a series of strong and pleasant imaginings, a kind of vision, as though they were caught up to heaven and saw glorious sights. I have been acquainted with some such instances, and I see no need whatsoever to bring in the Devil to explain them, nor to suppose them to be of the same nature as the visions of the prophets or Paul's rapture into paradise. Human nature, under these intense and powerful exercises of mind and emotion that some people experience, is all that needs to be brought into the account. If it may well be explained that people under a true sense of the glorious greatness and excellence of divine things, and soul-captivating views of the beauty and love of Christ, would have their natural strength overpowered — as I have already shown it may — then it is not at all strange that among a large number so affected and overcome, some individuals of particular temperaments should have their imaginations so affected. When this happens, the effect is nothing more than what bears a proportion and analogy to other effects of the intense exercise of their minds. It is no wonder that when the thoughts are so fixed, and the emotions so strong, and the whole

soul so engaged and enraptured and absorbed — when all other parts of the body are so affected as to be deprived of their strength, and the whole frame is on the verge of giving way — the brain in particular (especially in some constitutions), which is the part of the body most directly and immediately affected by intense thought and mental exercise, should be overtaxed and affected. Its strength and energy would for a season be diverted away from impressions received through the external senses, and entirely occupied in a stream of pleasant and delightful mental images, such as the mind's present state disposes it to.

Some people are prone to misinterpret such things and place too much weight on them — treating them as prophetic visions, or regarding what they imagine they see or hear in them as divine revelations and heavenly announcements of future events. In some instances I have known, experience proved otherwise. Yet it appears to me that such things are sometimes, in an indirect sense, from the Spirit of God — that is, the extraordinary frame of mind in which they occur, and the strong and vivid sense of divine things that occasions them, is from His Spirit. Also, the mind continues in its holy frame and retains a divine sense of the excellence of spiritual things even within the rapture — and that holy frame and sense is from the Spirit of God. The mental images that accompany it are incidental, and therefore there is commonly something in them that is confused, improper, or mistaken.

5. It is no sign that a work on the minds of people is not from the Spirit of God that example is used as a major means of it. It is certainly no argument that an effect is not from God that means are used in producing it, since we know that God's pattern is to use means in carrying on His work in the world. Using means does not

make an effect any less divine than if it came about through any other means. It is consistent with Scripture for people to be influenced by one another's good example. Scripture directs us to set good examples for that very purpose — Matthew 5:16, 1 Peter 3:1, 1 Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:7. It also directs us to be influenced by the good examples others set and to follow them — 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, Hebrews 6:12, Philippians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 4:16 and 11:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:9, 1 Thessalonians 1:7. This shows that example is one of God's own means, and it is certainly no argument that a work is not from God that God's own means are being used to carry it forward.

And just as it is a scriptural way of carrying on God's work through example, so it is also a reasonable way. It is no argument that people are not influenced by reason that they are influenced by example. This way of people conveying truth to one another has a real tendency to enlighten the mind and convince reason. No one would deny that conveying things to one another in words tends to enlighten minds; but the same things can be conveyed by actions, and often far more fully and effectively. Words are useful only insofar as they communicate our own understanding to others; but actions can sometimes do this far more completely. There is a language in actions, and in some cases it is much clearer and more convincing than words.

Therefore it is no argument against the validity of an effect that one person stirs and influences another, or that people are greatly affected by seeing others so affected — even if the impression is made simply by observing the signs of deep and unusual emotion in others' behavior, taking for granted what they are moved about, without hearing them say a single word. In such a case their be-

havior alone may carry enough meaning to convey what is in their minds to others, and to communicate their sense of things more powerfully than words alone ever could. If a person saw someone in extreme physical pain, he would receive far clearer and more convincing ideas of what that person was suffering from watching his actions in his distress than from the words of an unmoved, detached observer. In the same way, he might receive a greater sense of something excellent and deeply delightful from the behavior of someone actually experiencing it — someone who can see and taste it directly — than from the flat account of someone who has never experienced it himself. I invite that this matter be examined by the strictest reason.

There is also this argument that effects produced in people's minds by example are rational: it is evident that not only weak and ignorant people are greatly influenced by it. Nothing is more plain to anyone who observes the human race than that all kinds of people — the wise and the unwise, even those who most boast of their strength of reason — are more influenced by reason presented through example than by almost any other means.

It is true that when religious affections are stirred by this means — as when people are affected while hearing the word preached or through other means — the emotions of many prove shallow and soon fade, as Christ illustrates in the stony-ground hearers. But the emotions of some who are moved by example are lasting and prove to be saving.

There has never yet been a time of remarkable outpouring of the Spirit and great revival of religion in which example did not play a major role. This was true at the time of the Reformation, and it was clearly true in that great outpouring of the Spirit in the

apostles' days in Jerusalem, Samaria, Ephesus, and other parts of the world, as will be plain to anyone who attends carefully to the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles. Just as in those days one person was moved by another, so one city or town was influenced by the example of another — 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8: So that you became examples to all who believe in Macedonia and Achaia; for from you the word of the Lord sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone out.

It is not a valid objection to say that example is made so much use of when Scripture speaks of the word of God as the principal means of carrying on God's work. The word of God remains the principal means nonetheless, because it is the means through which all other means operate and become effective. The sacraments have no effect apart from the word. And it is the same with example: it becomes effective because all that is visible to the eye is meaningless and empty without the word of God to instruct and direct the mind. It is the word of God that is truly held forth and applied through example, just as the word of the Lord sounded forth to the other towns of Macedonia and Achaia through the example of those who believed in Thessalonica.

That example should be a major means of building up the church of God appears to be signified in several ways in Scripture. It is signified by Ruth's following Naomi out of the land of Moab into the land of Israel, when she resolved that she would not leave her but would go wherever she went and lodge wherever she lodged; and that Naomi's people would be her people, and Naomi's God her God. Ruth, who was the mother of David and of Christ, was undoubtedly a great type of the church, which is why her story

is included in the canon of Scripture. In her leaving the land of Moab and its gods to come and put her trust under the shadow of the wings of the God of Israel, we have a type not only of the conversion of the Gentile church, but of the conversion of every sinner who is naturally an alien and stranger — one who in conversion forsakes his own people and father's house, is brought near, and becomes a fellow citizen with the saints and a true Israelite. The same is signified in the effect the spouse's lovesickness has on the daughters of Jerusalem — that is, visible Christians — who are first awakened by seeing the bride in such extraordinary circumstances, and then converted. See Song of Solomon 5:8-9 and 6:1. This is undoubtedly one way that the Spirit and the bride say, come — Revelation 22:17 — that is, the Spirit speaking through the bride. It is also prophesied that God's work would be carried on greatly by this means in the last great outpouring of the Spirit that will usher in the glorious day of the church, spoken of so often in Scripture. Zechariah 8:21-23: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go at once to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of Hosts; I will go also. Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord. Thus says the Lord of Hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

6. It is no sign that a work among a people is not from the Spirit of God that many who appear to be subjects of it are guilty of great imprudence and irregularity in their conduct. We must consider that the purpose for which God pours out His Spirit is to make people holy, not to make them politically shrewd. It is no

wonder at all that in a mixed crowd of all kinds — wise and unwise, young and old, those of weak and strong natural ability — under strong impressions of mind, many behave imprudently. Few people know how to conduct themselves well under intense emotion of any kind, whether of a worldly or spiritual nature. It requires a great deal of wisdom, stability, and steadiness of mind. A thousand imprudences will not prove that a work is not from the Spirit of God — nor will many things that are irregular and genuinely contrary to the rules of God's holy word. That such things should occur is easily explained from the great weakness of human nature, together with the remaining darkness and corruption in those who are nonetheless subjects of the Spirit's saving influence and have a genuine zeal for God.

We have a striking example in the New Testament of a people who participated greatly in the outpouring of the Spirit in the apostles' days, and yet abounded in imprudences and serious irregularities — the church at Corinth. There is scarcely any church in the New Testament more celebrated for having received large measures of the Spirit of God, both in His ordinary work of convincing and converting sinners and in His extraordinary and miraculous gifts. Yet what manifold imprudences, grave and sinful irregularities, and strange confusion they fell into — at the Lord's Supper, in the exercise of church discipline, in their improper manner of attending to public worship, in disputes and divisions over their teachers, and even in the exercise of their extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, and the like — gifts exercised by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God himself.

And if we see great imprudences and even sinful irregularities in some who are used as significant instruments in carrying on the work, that will not prove it is not the work of God. The apostle Peter himself — a great, eminently holy, and inspired apostle, one of the chief instruments of establishing the Christian church in the world, and one of the foremost of the apostles — while actively engaged in this work, was guilty of a great and sinful error in his conduct, as the apostle Paul describes in Galatians 2:11-13: But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned; for before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles, but when they came he withdrew and held himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision; and the rest of the Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. If the great pillar of the Christian church — one of those who are the very foundations on which, next to Christ, the whole church is said to be built — was guilty of such an irregularity, is it any wonder that lesser instruments who do not have the same extraordinary guidance of the divine Spirit should be guilty of many irregularities?

And here in particular, it is no evidence that a work is not from God if many who are subjects of it, or are used as instruments to carry it on, are guilty of too great a readiness to label other professing Christians as unconverted. This fault arises through mistakes they have embraced concerning the marks by which to judge others as hypocrites or carnally minded — either from not duly grasping the latitude the Spirit of God uses in His methods of operation, or from failing to make proper allowance for the infirmity and corruption that may remain in the hearts of true saints. It also arises from a lack of due awareness of their own blindness and weakness

and remaining corruption, whereby spiritual pride may find a secret outlet in this direction, under some disguise and without being detected.

If we accept that truly godly people may have a great deal of remaining blindness and corruption, and may be prone to errors about the marks of hypocrisy — as everyone undoubtedly would allow — then it is understandable that they would sometimes fall into such errors. It is as easy to understand, and in some ways easier, why the remaining corruption in good people should sometimes find an undetected outlet this way than in most others. Though it is deeply unfortunate, there is no doubt that many holy people have erred in this direction.

Lukewarmness in religion is abominable, and zeal is an excellent grace; yet above all other Christian virtues, it needs to be strictly watched and examined, for it is the one in which corruption — and particularly pride and human passion — is most likely to mix in undetected. It is observable that there has never been a time of great reformation and much of a spirit of zeal in the church of God that was not accompanied by some notable instances of irregularity, where zeal ran out into excessive severity. In the apostles' days, a great deal of zeal was expended over unclean meats, with heated feelings among Christians toward one another, each party condemning and censuring the other as not truly Christian. Yet the apostle had charity for both as genuinely motivated by true piety. He who eats, says he, eats to the Lord and gives thanks to God; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. Similarly in the church at Corinth, people had gotten into the habit of lifting up some ministers and criticizing others, and were arrogantly taking sides. Yet none of these things

were a sign that the work so wonderfully carried on at that time was not the work of God. And afterward, when religion was still greatly flourishing in the world and a spirit of eminent holiness and zeal prevailed in the Christian church, that zeal ran out into very improper and excessive severity in the exercise of church discipline toward those who had fallen into sin. In some cases, people refused by any means to restore them to fellowship, however humble and repentant they appeared. In the days of Constantine the Great, the zeal of Christians against paganism ran out into a degree of persecution. And in that glorious revival of religion at the time of the Reformation, zeal appeared in many instances in very improper severity and even a degree of persecution — even in some of the most eminent reformers, such as the great Calvin. Many in those days of flourishing vital religion were guilty of harshly condemning others who differed from them in certain points of theology.

7. Nor are many errors in judgment and some delusions of Satan mixed in with the work any argument that the work in general is not from the Spirit of God. However great an outpouring of the Spirit there may be, we should not expect the Spirit of God to be given now in the same manner He was to the apostles — infallibly guiding them in points of Christian doctrine, so that their teaching could be relied upon as a rule for the whole church. And if many of Satan's delusions appear at the same time that a great religious concern prevails, this is no more an argument that the work in general is not from God than the fact that false miracles occurred in Egypt was an argument that the true miracles worked by God's hand were not genuine — even though Jannes and Jambres were working false miracles at the same time through the power of

the Devil. The same people may be greatly influenced by the Spirit of God and yet in some things be led away by Satan's delusions. This is no more of a paradox than many other things true of real saints in the present age, where grace dwells alongside much corruption, and the new man and the old man coexist in the same person, and the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Devil remain for a time together in the same heart. Many godly people have in this and other ages exposed themselves to terrible delusions by being too quick to treat impulses and impressions as though they were direct revelations from God — signaling future events or directing them where to go and what to do.

8. If some who were thought to have been genuinely affected fall away into serious errors or scandalous behavior, that is no argument that the work in general is not from the Spirit of God. The existence of counterfeits is no argument that nothing is genuine. Such things are always to be expected in a time of reformation. Looking into church history, we find no instance of a great revival of religion that was not accompanied by many such things. Instances of this kind in the apostles' days were countless — both those who fell into serious heresies, and those who fell into shameful practices — who had nevertheless appeared to be subjects of the work of the Spirit of God at that time. They had been accepted for a time by truly converted believers as brothers, members of their company, not suspected to be otherwise until they went out from them. These were not only ordinary Christians but teachers, officers, and prominent people in the Christian church — some endowed with miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, as appears from the beginning of Hebrews 6. One such was Judas, who was one of the twelve apostles and had long been constantly united with and inti-

mately among a company of truly experienced disciples, without being discovered or suspected, until he revealed himself through his scandalous act. He had been treated by Jesus Himself, in all outward things, as a true disciple — even to being given the role of apostle, being sent out to preach the gospel, and being endowed with miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Though Christ knew him, He did not at that time act in the character of the omniscient Judge and searcher of hearts, but acted as a minister of the visible church of God. Therefore He did not exclude Judas until he had revealed himself through his scandalous behavior — setting an example for other guides and rulers of the visible church not to take upon themselves the role of heart-searcher, but to be governed in their decisions by what is visible and open.

There were instances then of such apostates not only among those who had been thought to be true Christians, but some who had been regarded as especially full of the grace of God's Spirit. One such instance was Nicolas, one of the seven deacons, who was seen by the Christians in Jerusalem — during that extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit — as a man full of the Holy Ghost, and was chosen from among the multitude of Christians to that office for that very reason. See Acts 6:3, 5. Yet he afterward fell away and became the founder of a set of corrupt heretics known for shameful practices, called from his name the sect of the Nicolaitans — Revelation 2:6, 15.

Similarly, at the time of the Reformation from Popery, how great was the number of those who for a time appeared to join with the reformers, yet fell away into the most extreme and absurd errors and shameful practices.

And it is particularly noteworthy that in times of great outpouring of the Spirit to revive religion in the world, a number of those who for a time appeared to share in it have fallen off into strange and extravagant errors and extreme enthusiasm — boasting of high degrees of spirituality and perfection, condemning and looking down on others as carnal. This happened with the Gnostics in apostolic times. And it happened with the various sects of Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation, as Anthony Burgess observes in his book *Spiritual Refining*, Part 1, Sermon 23, page 132. The first worthy reformers and glorious instruments of God found bitter conflict in this — they were pressed not only by formalists and tradition-bound Catholics on one side, but also by men on the other side who claimed to be more enlightened than the reformers themselves. These men called those who adhered to Scripture and tested revelations by it "Literists" and "Vowelists" — meaning they were acquainted only with the words and vowels of Scripture but had nothing of the Spirit of God. And wherever in any town the true doctrine of the gospel broke through and displaced Popery, such opinions immediately sprang up like weeds among good wheat, causing great divisions and making the Reformation appear abominable and repugnant to the world — as if the Reformation were the sun that gave warmth to those worms and serpents, causing them to crawl out of the ground. Hence they attacked Luther, saying he had only proclaimed a carnal gospel. Some of the leaders of these wild enthusiasts had for a time been highly regarded by the early reformers and were especially dear to them.

The same pattern appeared in England in the time when vital religion flourished greatly during the days of King Charles the First, the Interregnum, and Oliver Cromwell. And in the early days of New England, in her purest times when vital piety flourished, such things broke out as well. Therefore the Devil's sowing such weeds is no proof that a true work of the Spirit of God is not being gloriously carried forward.

9. It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God that it is promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and doing so with great earnestness and feeling. If there is really a hell of such dreadful and endless torments as is generally believed — a place that multitudes are in great danger of, and into which the majority of people in Christian nations have in fact fallen generation after generation for want of a proper sense of its terror and their own danger — then why would it be improper for those with the care of souls to take great pains to make people feel how serious it is? Why should they not be told as much of the truth as possible? If I am in danger of going to hell, I would want to know as much as possible about how dreadful it is. If I am prone to neglect taking proper steps to avoid it, then the person who does the most to lay before me the truth of my situation — who sets forth my misery and danger in the most vivid manner — does me the greatest kindness.

I appeal to everyone present: is this not exactly what you would do in the face of any great earthly danger? If any of you who are parents saw one of your children in a house that was all on fire overhead, in imminent danger of being consumed in the flames — a child who seemed unaware of the danger and was refusing to flee, despite your having spoken to him repeatedly — would you go

on speaking to him only in a calm, detached manner? Would you not cry aloud, call to him urgently, and describe the danger and his foolishness in delaying in the most vivid terms you were capable of? Would not natural instinct itself teach you this and compel you to it? If you continued to speak to him in a cool tone, as you would in ordinary conversation about insignificant matters, would not the people around you begin to think you had lost your mind? This is not how people in this room or anywhere else handle serious earthly dangers that call for urgent attention and swift action. No one warns about such things only briefly, or warns in a cold, detached manner when deeply concerned. Nature teaches people otherwise. If those of us who have the care of souls truly knew what hell was — if we had seen the state of the damned, or by any other means had become fully aware of how dreadful it is — and at the same time knew that the greater part of people were headed there, and saw our hearers in imminent danger, unaware of that danger, and so after repeated warnings continuing to neglect escape, it would be morally impossible for us to avoid earnestly and repeatedly setting before them the dreadfulness of that misery, their great exposure to it, and urging them to flee from it — even crying aloud to them.

When ministers preach about hell and warn sinners to avoid it in a cold manner — though they may say in words that it is infinitely terrible — they contradict themselves. Actions, as I observed before, carry meaning just as words do. When a preacher's words represent the sinner's condition as infinitely dreadful while his behavior and tone say otherwise, his manner cancels out his message. The language of his actions in such a case is far more powerful than the bare meaning of his words.

I do not think that only the law should be preached — ministers may fail to preach other things sufficiently as well. The gospel is to be preached alongside the law, and the law is to be preached only to make way for the gospel and to enable the gospel to be preached effectively. The main task of gospel ministers is to preach the gospel; it is the purpose of the law. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. A minister would therefore err greatly if he dwelt so heavily on the terrors of the law that he forgot his true aim and neglected to preach the gospel. Yet the law must be insisted on a great deal, and the preaching of the gospel is likely to be without effect without it.

And certainly earnestness and emotion in speaking is fitting and appropriate when it matches the nature and importance of the subject. That said, there can be such a thing as an unseemly loudness in a preacher — something beyond what naturally arises from his subject, where the content and manner do not suit each other well.

Some speak as if it were unreasonable to think of frightening people into heaven; but I think it is entirely reasonable to try to frighten people away from hell when they are standing on its very edge, about to fall in, and are not even aware of it. It is entirely reasonable to frighten a person out of a burning house. The word fright is commonly used to describe sudden, groundless fear or unwarranted alarm; but surely a well-founded fear, with good reason behind it, however great it may be, should not be dismissed by that label.

Having shown, in several instances, what are not evidences that a work among a people is not a work of the Spirit of God,

I now proceed in the second place — as I proposed — to show positively what are the sure, distinguishing, scriptural evidences and marks of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may safely judge any operation we find in ourselves or observe among a people, without danger of being misled.

As I said before, I will confine myself entirely to those marks the apostle gives us in the chapter containing my text, where this matter is handled more plainly and fully than anywhere else in the Bible. In addressing these marks I will take them in the order in which I find them in the chapter.

1. When the Spirit at work among a people operates in such a way as to raise their esteem for that Jesus who was born of the virgin and was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem — and seems to confirm and strengthen their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us, that He is the Son of God and the Savior of men — that is a sure sign that the Spirit at work is the Spirit of God. The apostle gives us this sign in verses 2 and 3: By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. This implies a confession not merely that a person appeared in Palestine who did and suffered those things recorded of Him, but that that person was Christ — that is, the Son of God, the Anointed of God to be Lord and Savior, as the name Jesus Christ implies. That this is the apostle's meaning is confirmed by verse 15, where he is still on the same subject of signs of the true Spirit: Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

It is also important to observe that the word confess as it is often used in the New Testament means more than merely allowing or acknowledging. It implies establishing and confirming something by testimony, and declaring it with a sense of esteem and affection. So in Matthew 10:32: Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. Romans 15:9: I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name. And Philippians 2:11: That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. That this is the force of the expression as the apostle John uses it here is confirmed by another passage in the same letter, in the next chapter, verse 1: Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and everyone who loves Him who begets also loves Him who is begotten of Him. It is also confirmed by the parallel passage in the apostle Paul, where the same rule is given for distinguishing the true Spirit from all counterfeits — 1 Corinthians 12:3: Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, Jesus is accursed (that is, shows a low or contemptuous regard for Him); and no one can say that Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

So then, if the Spirit at work among a people is clearly seen to operate in such a way as to convince them of Christ and lead them to Christ — to strengthen their minds in believing the story of Christ as He appeared in the flesh, that He is the Son of God, sent by God to save sinners, that He is the only Savior, and that they stand in great need of Him — and if it seems to produce in them higher and more honorable thoughts of Him than they previously had, and to draw their affections more toward Him, that is a sure

sign that it is the true and right Spirit. This is true regardless of whether we can determine whether that conviction and affection is of the kind and degree that is saving.

The apostle's words are notable: the person the Spirit gives testimony to — the one whose esteem and honor the Spirit elevates — must be that Jesus who appeared in the flesh, and not some substitute. Not any mystical or imaginary Christ. The Spirit of the Quakers, for example, exalts the inner light while diminishing their esteem for and dependence on the outward Christ — Jesus as He came in the flesh. But the Spirit that gives testimony to that Jesus and leads people to Him can be none other than the Spirit of God.

The Devil has the most bitter and relentless hatred toward that person, especially in His role as the Savior of men. The Devil mortally hates the story and doctrine of redemption; he would never try to produce in people more honorable thoughts of Christ, or to draw them to fear Him more and give greater weight to His instructions and commands. The Spirit that inclines people's hearts toward the seed of the woman is not the spirit of the serpent, who has such irreconcilable enmity against Him. He who raises people's esteem for the glorious Michael, that prince of the angels, is not the spirit of the dragon who is at war with Him.

2. When the Spirit at work operates against the interest of Satan's kingdom — which is maintained by encouraging and establishing sin and feeding people's worldly desires — that is a sure sign it is a true and not a false spirit. The apostle gives us this sign in verses 4 and 5: You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from

the world, and the world listens to them. Here there is a clear contrast. The apostle is still comparing those influenced by the two opposite kinds of spirits — the true and the false — and pointing out the difference. The one is from God and overcomes the spirit of the world; the other is from the world and speaks and savors the things of the world. The spirit of the Devil is here called he who is in the world. Christ says: My kingdom is not of this world. It is otherwise with Satan's kingdom; he is the god of this world.

What the apostle means by the world, or the things that are of the world, we learn from his own words in the second chapter of this epistle, verses 15 and 16: Do not love the world or the things in the world; if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. So by the world the apostle clearly means everything that belongs to the interest of sin — all the corruptions and lusts of people, and all the actions and objects that gratify them. In these things lies the interest of his kingdom — the spirit that is in the world, the god of this world.

We may therefore safely conclude, from what the apostle says, that the Spirit at work among a people — when observed to operate in such a way as to lessen people's esteem for the pleasures, profits, and honors of the world; to wean their hearts from an eager pursuit of these things; to engage them in a deep concern about a future and eternal happiness in that invisible world the gospel reveals; to put them on earnestly seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and to convince them of the dreadfulness of sin, the guilt it brings, and the misery it exposes them to — that Spirit must be the Spirit of God.

We should not suppose that Satan would go about to convince people of sin and awaken their consciences. It can in no way serve his purposes to make that candle of the Lord burn brighter, or to open the mouth of God's representative in the soul. Whatever else he does, it is in his interest to lull conscience to sleep and keep it quiet. To have conscience wide awake and active in the soul will tend to obstruct and hinder all his plans of darkness, and will constantly disturb his schemes and undermine his interests in the soul, throwing everything into disorder whenever he tries to move forward. Would the Devil, when attempting to establish people in a course and state of sin, first go about to enlighten and awaken conscience to see the dreadfulfulness of sin, make people deeply afraid of sin, make them feel keenly their misery on account of past sins, fill them with a great desire and need to be delivered from their guilt, and make them more careful, watchful, and attentive to recognize sin and avoid future sins — and more afraid of the Devil's temptations and more careful to guard against them? What do those people do with their reason who suppose that the Spirit producing all this is the spirit of the Devil?

Someone might say that the Devil could awaken consciences as a deception — to make people think they have experienced a saving work of the Spirit while still in fact remaining in the gall of bitterness. But to this it may be replied that the person with an awakened conscience is the least likely of anyone to be deceived. It is the drowsy, insensible, numbed conscience that is most easily blinded. The more sensitive conscience is in a diseased soul, the less easily it is quieted without genuine healing. The more fully conscience is made aware of the dreadfulfulness of sin and of a person's own great guilt in it, the less likely he is to rest in his own

righteousness or be satisfied with mere shadows. A person who has been thoroughly shaken by a sense of his danger and misery is not easily flattered into believing himself safe without solid grounds.

To awaken conscience and convince a person of the evil of sin cannot tend to establish sin; it certainly tends instead to make way for sin and Satan to be cast out. Therefore this is a good argument that the Spirit producing these effects cannot be the spirit of the Devil — if Christ knew how to reason, who told the Pharisees who claimed the Spirit He worked by was the spirit of the Devil, that Satan would not cast out Satan — Matthew 12:25-26.

Therefore, if we see people made sensible of the dreadful nature of sin, and of God's displeasure against it, and of their own miserable condition by reason of sin, and earnestly concerned for their eternal salvation, and sensible of their need of God's pity and help, and engaged in seeking it through the means God has appointed — we may certainly conclude that it is from the Spirit of God. This is true whatever physical effects this concern produces in them, whether it causes them to cry out aloud, or shriek, or faint, or throws them into convulsions, or whatever other way the blood and spirits are moved.

The influence of the Spirit of God is even more unmistakably evident when people have their hearts drawn away from the world and weaned from the things they previously longed for — and drawn instead toward the excellent spiritual enjoyments of another world promised in the gospel, by a genuine sense of the excellence of divine things and a real love for them.

3. A spirit that operates in such a way as to cause people a greater regard for the holy Scriptures, and to establish them more firmly in their truth and divine authority, is certainly the Spirit of God. The apostle gives us this rule in verse 6: We are of God; he who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. We are of God — that is, we apostles are sent forth and appointed by God to teach the world, to deliver the doctrines and instructions that are to be their rule. Therefore he who knows God hears us, and so on. The apostle's argument in this verse applies equally to all who in the same sense are of God — that is, all those whom God has appointed and inspired to deliver to His church its rule of faith and practice. This includes all the prophets and apostles whose teaching God made the foundation on which He built His church, as in Ephesians 2:20 — all the writers of the holy Scriptures. The Devil would never try to produce in people a regard for that divine word which God has given as the great, standing rule for the direction of His church in all religious matters and all the concerns of their souls throughout all ages. A spirit of delusion will not incline people to seek direction from the mouth of God. To the law and to the testimony is never the cry of those evil spirits that have no light in them; for it is God's own direction for exposing their delusions — Isaiah 8:19-20: And when they say to you, Inquire of the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony — if they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no light in them. The Devil does not say what Abraham said — They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. Nor does he say what the voice from

heaven said concerning Christ: Hear Him. Would the spirit of error, in order to deceive people, produce in them a high opinion of the infallible rule and incline them to think much of it and be very familiar with it? Would the prince of darkness, in order to advance his kingdom of darkness, lead people to the sun? The Devil has always shown a fierce and deadly hostility toward that holy book, the Bible. He has done everything in his power to extinguish that light and to draw people away from it, knowing that it is the very light by which his kingdom of darkness is to be overthrown. For many ages he has experienced its power to defeat his purposes and overthrow his designs. It is his constant torment. It is the main weapon Michael uses in the war against him. It is the sword of the Spirit that pierces and conquers him. It is that great and sharp sword spoken of in Revelation 19:15, that proceeds out of the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, with which He strikes His enemies. Every text of Scripture is a dart to torment the old serpent. He has felt its stinging force thousands of times; therefore he rages against the Bible and hates every word in it. We may be sure, then, that he will never go about to raise people's esteem for it or their love of it. And accordingly we see that it is common among enthusiasts to belittle this written rule and to set up the inner light or some other standard above it.

4. Another rule for judging spirits may be drawn from the opposite names given to the two opposite spirits in the last words of verse 6: the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. These names express the two opposite characters of the Spirit of God and the other spirits that counterfeit His work. Therefore, if by observing the manner in which a spirit at work among a people operates, we see that it works as a spirit of truth — leading people to truth, convinc-

ing them of things that are true — we may safely determine it is the right and true spirit. For instance, if we observe that the spirit at work makes people more sensible than before that there is a God, that He is a great God and a God who hates sin, and makes them realize more fully that they must die, that life is short and very uncertain, and that there is another world — that they have immortal souls and must give account of themselves to God — and if it convinces them that they are deeply sinful by nature and practice, and that they are helpless in themselves, and confirms them in other things that agree with sound doctrine, then that spirit operates as a spirit of truth. It represents things as they truly are. It brings people to the light; for whatever makes truth visible is light, as the apostle Paul observes in Ephesians 5:13: But all things that are exposed are made visible by the light; for whatever makes visible is light. We may therefore conclude that it is not the spirit of darkness that thus exposes and makes truth manifest. Christ tells us that Satan is a liar and the father of lies, and that his kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. It is sustained and advanced only by darkness and error. Satan holds all his power and authority through darkness. Hence we read of the power of darkness in Luke 22:53 and Colossians 1:13. And devils are called the rulers of the darkness of this world. Whatever spirit removes our darkness and brings us to the light — undeceives us and convinces us of truth — does us a genuine kindness. If I am brought to see truth, and made to perceive things as they truly are, I should immediately thank God for it, without first stopping to ask by what means I received such a benefit.

5. If the spirit at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and man, that is a sure sign it is the Spirit of God. The apostle dwells on this sign from verse 6 to the end of the chapter: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love, and so forth. It is clear here that the apostle is still comparing those two kinds of people influenced by opposite spirits, and points to love as the mark by which we can know who has the true spirit. This is especially evident in verses 12 and 13: 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. In these verses love is spoken of as if it were the very nature of the Holy Spirit Himself — as if divine love dwelling in us and the Spirit of God dwelling in us were the same thing. This is also the case in the last two verses of the preceding chapter and in verse 16 of this chapter. Therefore this last mark, which the apostle gives of the true spirit, he seems to regard as the most significant; he insists on it at much greater length than on all the rest, and speaks explicitly of both love to God and love to people. He speaks of love to people in verses 7, 11, and 12; of love to God in verses 17, 18, and 19; and of both together in the last two verses; and of love to people as flowing from love to God in those same two verses.

Therefore, when the spirit at work among a people tends in this direction — bringing many of them to high and exalting thoughts of the divine being and His glorious perfections; producing in them an admiring, delightful sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ; representing Him as the chief among ten thousands, altogether lovely, and making Him precious to the soul; winning and

drawing the heart through those motives and incentives to love which the apostle speaks of in this passage — namely, the wonderful and free love of God in giving His only begotten Son to die for us, and the wonderful dying love of Christ toward us who had no love for Him but were His enemies, as in verses 9 and 10: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And verse 16: And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. And verse 19: We love Him because He first loved us. When the spirit moves people to love on these grounds, and makes the attributes of God as revealed in the gospel and manifested in Christ into delightful objects of contemplation; makes the soul long after God and Christ, after their presence and fellowship, knowledge of them, and conformity to them; and stirs the soul to live in a way that pleases and honors them; and also quiets hostility among people, produces a spirit of peace and goodwill, stirs people to acts of kindness and earnest longing for the salvation of others' souls, and produces a delight in those who appear as children of God and followers of Christ — when a spirit operates in all these ways among a people, there is the highest kind of evidence of the influence of a true and divine Spirit.

There is indeed a counterfeit of love that often appears among those led by a spirit of delusion. Among the wildest enthusiasts there is commonly a kind of unity and affection toward one another, arising from self-love — produced by their agreement with each other in those things wherein they differ greatly from everyone else, and for which they are ridiculed by the rest of mankind.

This naturally makes them prize all the more highly the mutual esteem they find in each other for the peculiarities that make them the objects of others' contempt. The ancient Gnostics and the wild enthusiasts who appeared at the beginning of the Reformation boasted in the same way of their great love for one another; one such group even called themselves the Family of Love. But this is an entirely different thing from the Christian love I have just described. It is nothing more than the working of natural self-love — no more a true goodwill than the bond and friendship among a company of pirates who are at war with all the rest of the world. The passage of John we are considering says enough about the nature and motive of truly Christian love to thoroughly distinguish it from all such counterfeits. It is a love that arises from an appreciation of the wonderful riches of free grace and the sovereignty of God's love toward us in Christ Jesus — accompanied by a sense of our own utter unworthiness, as those who are by nature enemies and haters of God and Christ, and with a renunciation of all our own goodness and righteousness. See verses 9, 10, 11, and 19. The surest mark of true divine and supernatural love, distinguishing it from counterfeits that arise from natural self-love, is that Christian virtue which above all others renounces, abases, and empties self — namely humility. Christian love, or true charity, is a humble love — 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: Charity is not boastful; is not arrogant; does not act improperly; does not seek its own; is not easily provoked. Therefore, when we see love in people attended by a sense of their own smallness, vileness, weakness, and utter insufficiency — along with self-distrust, self-emptying, self-renunciation, and poverty of spirit — there are the plain marks of the Spirit of God. He who thus dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. The

love the apostle speaks of as great evidence of the true spirit is God's love or Christ's love, as in verse 12: His love is perfected in us. What kind of love that is, we can see most clearly in what appeared in Christ, in the example He set when He was here on earth. The love that appeared in that Lamb of God was not only love for friends, but for enemies — and love accompanied by a meek and humble spirit. Learn of me, says He, for I am meek and lowly in heart.

Love and humility are the two things most contrary to the spirit of the Devil of anything in the world; for the character of that evil spirit consists above all things in pride and malice.

I have now spoken in detail to the several marks the apostle gives us of a work of the true Spirit. Some of these things the Devil would not do even if he could. He would not awaken conscience and make people sensible of their miserable state by nature on account of sin, and sensible of their great need of a Savior. He would not confirm people in a belief that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, or raise people's esteem and regard for Him. He would not produce in people's minds a high opinion of the necessity, usefulness, and truth of the holy Scriptures, or incline them to listen to them or make much use of them. Nor would he go about to show people the truth about the things that concern their soul's welfare — to undeceive them, lead them out of darkness into light, and give them a view of things as they truly are. And there are other things that the Devil neither can nor will do. He will not give people a spirit of divine love, or Christian humility and poverty of spirit. Nor could he give these things even if he wanted to, for he cannot give what he does not himself possess. These things are as contrary as possible to his nature. Therefore, when there is an ex-

traordinary influence or operation appearing on the minds of a people, and these things are found in it, we are safe in concluding that it is the work of God. This holds regardless of what other circumstances it may be attended with, what instruments are used, what methods are taken to promote it, what means a sovereign God — whose judgments are a great deep — employs to carry it on, or whatever movements may be seen in the animal spirits, or whatever effects may be produced on people's bodies. These marks the apostle has given are sufficient to stand on their own and support themselves. Wherever they are found, they plainly show the finger of God and are sufficient to outweigh a thousand minor objections arising from oddities, irregularities, errors in conduct, and the delusions and scandals of some who profess to be affected.

Objection. But here some may object against the sufficiency of the marks given, citing what the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:13-14: For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

To this I answer: this can be no objection against the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true Spirit from the false — even in those false apostles and false prophets in whom the Devil was disguised as an angel of light — because it is precisely with them in view that the apostle gives these marks. This appears from the words of the text: Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. And the reason he gives is: Because many false prophets have gone out into the world. There are many who have gone out into the world who are ministers of the Devil, disguising themselves as prophets of God, in whom the spirit of the Devil has taken on the appearance of an an-

gel of light. Test the spirits, therefore, by these rules I will give you, so that you may be able to distinguish the true Spirit from the false under such a crafty disguise. The false prophets the apostle John speaks of are clearly the same kind of people as the false apostles and deceitful workers the apostle Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians — those in whom the Devil was disguised as an angel of light. We may therefore be sure that the marks the apostle gives are specially designed to distinguish the true Spirit from the Devil disguised as an angel of light, for that is the apostle's declared purpose and design — to give marks by which the true Spirit may be recognized even in the face of such counterfeits.

If we look at what is said about these false prophets and false apostles throughout the New Testament and observe how the Devil was disguised as an angel of light in them, we will find nothing that in the slightest weakens the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true Spirit from such counterfeits. The Devil disguised himself as an angel of light in that there was a show — and great boasts — of extraordinary knowledge in divine things among them; Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 1:6-7 and 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:14, 16-18; Titus 1:10, 16. Hence their followers called themselves Gnostics, from their great pretended knowledge. The Devil in them also mimicked the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in visions, revelations, prophecies, miracles, and the immediate leading of the Spirit in what they did. Hence they are called false apostles and false prophets; see Matthew 24:24. There was also a false show of and lying pretense to great holiness and devotion in words: Romans 16:17-18; Ephesians 4:14. Hence they are called deceitful workers, and wells, and clouds without water — 2 Corinthians 11:13; 2 Peter 2:17; Jude 12. There was also a show of extraordinary

piety and righteousness in their superstitious worship: Colossians 2:16-18, 21-23. So they had a false, proud, and bitter zeal; Galatians 4:17-18; 1 Timothy 1:6 and 6:4-5. And likewise a false show of humility in affecting an extraordinary outward lowliness and dejection, when they were in fact vainly puffed up with their fleshly mind — making a righteousness of their humility and being exceedingly lifted up with their supposed piety: Colossians 2:18, 23. But how do any of these things in the slightest undermine the distinguishing evidences of the true Spirit that have been set forth?

Beyond such empty shows that may come from the Devil, there are also common influences of the Spirit which are often mistaken for saving grace. But these are outside the present question, because though they are not saving, they are still the work of the true Spirit.

Having now fulfilled what I first proposed — considering what are the certain, distinguishing marks by which we may safely judge any work under our observation, whether it is from the Spirit of God or not — I now proceed to the application.

I. From what has been said, I will venture to draw this inference: that the extraordinary influence that has lately appeared on the minds of people throughout this land — causing in them an unusual concern and deep engagement with the things of religion — is undoubtedly, in general, from the Spirit of God. There are only two things needed in order to judge such a work: facts and rules. The rules of God's word have been laid before us. As for facts, there are only two ways to arrive at them so as to be in a position to compare them with the rules: either through our own observation, or through reliable accounts from others who have had the opportunity to observe.

As for this work that has lately been carried on in the land, there are many things about it that are widely known — that is, unless someone has been entirely out of the way of observation and hearing — which, unless the apostle John was mistaken in his rules, are sufficient to identify it in general as the work of God. It is well known that the Spirit at work draws people's minds away from the vanities of the world and engages them in a deep concern about future and eternal happiness in another world, putting them on earnestly seeking their salvation and convincing them of the dreadfulfulness of sin and of their own guilty and miserable condition by nature. It is well known that it awakens people's consciences and makes them keenly aware of the dreadfulfulness of God's anger, and produces in them a great desire, earnest care, and active effort to obtain His favor. It is well known that in general it puts them on more diligent use of the means of grace God has appointed. It is also well known that in general it produces in people a greater regard for the word of God, a desire to hear and read it, and to be more familiar with the holy Scriptures than they used to be. And it is plainly evident that the Spirit at work in general operates as a spirit of truth, making people more fully aware of what is really true about things that concern their eternal salvation — such as that they must die, that life is very short and uncertain, that there is a great sin-hating God to whom they are accountable and who will fix them in an eternal state in another world, and that they stand in great need of a Savior. It is furthermore well known that the Spirit at work makes people more sensible of the value of the Jesus who was crucified and of their need of Him, and puts them on earnestly seeking an interest in Him. These things cannot be hidden from people throughout the land, since the work has not

been confined to a few towns in some remote corner but has been carried on in many places across all parts of the land — and in most of the principal, most populated, and most public places in it. Christ in this respect has worked among us in the same manner He worked His miracles in Judea. The work has now continued for a considerable time, affording ample opportunity to observe its nature. And all who have been much engaged with the work and have been closely acquainted with those who are subjects of it see a great deal more which, by the apostle's rules, clearly and certainly shows it to be the work of God.

And here I would observe that the nature and tendency of a spirit at work may be determined with much greater certainty, and with far less danger of being deceived, when it is observed across a large and varied multitude of people of all kinds in various different places, than when it is seen only in a few people in some particular location who have been much in each other's company. A small number of people might agree to deceive others by a false pretense and by professing things they never actually experienced in their own minds. But when the work is spread across a large part of a country — in places distant from one another, among people of all sorts and all ages, in multitudes of persons of sound mind, good understanding, and known integrity — it would be the greatest absurdity to suppose that from all the observation that can be made, all that is heard from them and seen in them over many months by those who know them most intimately in these matters and have long been acquainted with them, one still cannot determine what kind of influence the operation they are under has on their minds — whether it tends to awaken their consciences or to numb them; whether it tends to make them more concerned for

their salvation or more neglectful of it; whether it seems to confirm them in a belief of the Scriptures or to lead them toward unbelief; whether it makes them more or less attentive to the great truths of religion. There is probably no one in this room who considers himself to have sound judgment and honest character who would not feel insulted if, after declaring to others that he had changed his mind on certain matters — that he now found himself convinced of things he formerly did not believe, that he experienced certain fears he had not previously had, or found himself with a greater or lesser esteem for certain things — those he told it to simply refused to believe him, even though they had long known him well and he had consistently maintained the same profession for many months. But it would be far more unreasonable when such professions are made not by one person alone but by a great portion of the people in a land, to suppose that they all agree in professing what they do not actually feel in their souls.

Here it is worth observing that for persons to profess that they are convinced of certain divine truths, or that they esteem and love certain divine things in a saving manner, is very different from professing that they are more convinced or confirmed in those truths than they used to be, and find they regard them more than before. Honest people of common sense have far greater right to have the latter profession believed than the former — though even in the former case it is vastly less likely that a whole people in general would be deceived than that some particular individuals would be. But whether people's convictions and the change in their dispositions and affections are of the kind and degree that is saving is beside the present question. If there are such effects on people's judgments, dispositions, and affections as have been de-

scribed, whether they be saving in their degree and manner or not, it is nonetheless a sign of the influence of the Spirit of God. The scriptural rules serve to identify the common influences of the Spirit of God — as well as those that are saving — and to distinguish them from the influence of other causes.

As one whom God's providence has placed for some months past much among those who have been subjects of the work that has lately been carried on in the land — and particularly one who has had abundant opportunity to see and observe those extraordinary things that many have been much troubled by, such as people crying out aloud, shrieking, being seized with great bodily agonies, and being deprived of their physical strength, and the like — and having done so in many different towns, and having been closely acquainted with great numbers of such people both during and after those extraordinary experiences, repeatedly over time, observing the manner and outcome of those operations and their fruits over several months — many of them being persons I have known for a long time and been intimately acquainted with in matters of the soul, both before and since — I regard myself as called on this occasion to give my testimony. So far as the nature and tendency of such a work is capable of falling under the observation of a bystander — to whom those affected have opened their hearts, or as it may be reached by diligent and thorough inquiry — this work has all the marks that have been described. This is true in very many instances in every article. In particular, in many of those who have been subjects of such extraordinary physical effects, all those marks have appeared to a very great degree.

Those in whom these unusual appearances have been seen have been of two kinds: those who have been in great distress from a sense of their sin and misery, and those who have been overcome with a sweet sense of the greatness, wonderfulness, and excellency of divine things. Of the many in the first category that I have had opportunity to observe and become acquainted with, there have been very few in whom — by everything observable in them at the time or afterward — the distress did not arise from real, genuine conviction, and from being to some degree sensible of what was actually true. Though I do not suppose that when such things were commonly seen, people subjected themselves to the same violent restraint in suppressing outward expressions of their distress that they might otherwise have exercised, yet there were very few in whom there was any appearance of feigning or performing such expressions, and very many for whom avoiding them would have been utterly impossible. Generally, those who have been in these agonies have appeared to be in full possession of their reason; and those who have been able to speak have been well able to describe the state of their minds and the cause of their distress at the time, and to remember and give a clear account of it afterward. I have known a very few instances where someone in extreme distress was for a short time somewhat deprived of the use of reason; but among the many hundreds — perhaps thousands — who have lately been brought to such agonies, I have never yet known one who was lastingly deprived of their reason. In some I have known, melancholy has clearly been mixed in; and when that is the case, the difference is very apparent. Their distresses are of a different character and operate in a different manner than when the distress is from genuine conviction alone. It is not truth only that disturbs

them, but many groundless fears and notions that will yield to neither Scripture nor reason. Some in their great distress have not been able to give a clear account of themselves or to describe the sense they had of things, or to explain the nature and cause of their trouble to others — yet I have had no reason to think they were not under genuine conviction, and in them there has been a good outcome. But this will not surprise anyone who has had much to do with souls under spiritual distress. Some things they are aware of are entirely new to them; their inner experiences and sensations are new, and they therefore do not know how to match language to them, or find words to express them. And some who at first say they do not know what was the matter with them, when carefully questioned and drawn out, have been able to describe their condition — though left to themselves they could not find the expressions to do so.

Some say they think the terror that such persons experience — producing these effects on their bodies — is nothing more than fright. But a distinction must certainly be made between very great fear and extreme distress arising from a genuine perception of some dreadful truth — a cause fully proportionate to such an effect — and a needless, groundless fright. Groundless fright is of two kinds. First, when persons are terrified by something that is not true — of this I have seen very few instances, except in cases of melancholy. Second, when persons are under a childish alarm arising merely from some frightening outward appearance or noise, producing only a vague, general impression that something or other is terrible without any specific dreadful truth in their minds. Of this second kind of fright I have seen very little evidence among either old or young.

Those in such extremity commonly express a deep sense of their great wickedness, the number and severity of their actual sins, and the dreadful corruption, enmity, and perverseness of their hearts, along with a dreadful stubbornness and hardness of heart. They sense their great guilt before God, and the dreadful-ness of the punishment that sin exposes them to. Very often they have a vivid sense of the horrible pit of eternal misery, and at the same time it appears to them that the great God who holds them in His hands is intensely angry with them. His wrath appears overwhelmingly terrible to them. Seeing God so greatly provoked and His wrath so aroused, they fear they are in great danger — that He will not put up with them any longer but will cut them off at any moment and send them down to that dreadful pit before them. At the same time they see no refuge. They see more and more the emptiness of everything they previously trusted in and flattered themselves with, until they are brought to despair in everything, and to see that they are entirely at the disposal of the mere will of the God who is so angry with them. Very many, in the midst of their extremity, have been brought to an extraordinary sense that they fully deserve the wrath and destruction that loom before them. Even while fearing every moment that it would be executed upon them, they have been strongly convinced that it would be entirely just if it were, and that God is indeed absolutely sovereign. Very often some text of Scripture expressing God's sovereignty has been impressed powerfully on their minds, bringing them a measure of calm, and they have been brought as it were to lie at God's feet. After great agonies, just before light has broken through, they have been composed and quiet in a kind of submission to a just and sovereign God, though their bodily strength is much spent and

sometimes their life itself seems nearly gone. Then light has appeared — a glorious Redeemer with His wonderful, all-sufficient grace has been set before them, often through some sweet invitation in Scripture. Sometimes the light comes suddenly, sometimes more gradually, filling their souls with love, wonder, joy, and self-abasement. Their hearts are drawn out in longing after the excellent and lovely Redeemer — longing to lie in the dust before Him, longing that others might see and embrace and be delivered by Him, and longing to live to His glory — yet sensible that they can do nothing of themselves. They appear vile in their own eyes and maintain a watchful, jealous eye over their own hearts. All the appearances of a real change of heart have followed, and grace has acted from time to time in the same manner it has always acted in those who were converted in former times — with the same kinds of struggles, temptations, buffetings, and comforts — except that in many, the light and comfort have been of a higher degree than usual. Many very young children have been so affected. There have been some instances very much like those demon-possessed individuals we read of in Mark 1:26 and 9:26, of whom we read that when the demon had cried out with a loud voice and thrown them into convulsions, he came out of them. Those instances were probably designed to foreshadow such things as these. Some go through several rounds of great agony before they find relief; and some have experienced such distress and it has passed off without any deliverance following at all.

Some object that it is great confusion when a number of people in such states are gathered together, making noise; and say that God cannot be the author of it because He is a God of order, not of confusion. But let it be considered: what is the proper meaning of

confusion but the disruption of an order of things whereby they are rightly arranged and properly directed toward their end, so that the orderly connection of means is broken and they fail of their purpose? But conviction and conversion of sinners is the obtaining of the very end of religious means. I do not mean that people who are extraordinarily moved should not try to restrain such outward expressions as much as they well can, and should especially restrain themselves during solemn public worship. But if God is pleased to so powerfully work on consciences that people cannot avoid great outward expressions — even to the point of interrupting and breaking off the public service they were attending — I do not think this is confusion or an unfortunate interruption, any more than if a company had gathered in a field to pray for rain, and were interrupted by a plentiful shower. Would to God that all the public assemblies in the land were broken off from their public services with such confusion as this next Sabbath day! We need not grieve over the breaking of the order of means when the end to which that order is directed is being obtained. A man going on a journey to fetch a treasure need not be sorry if he meets the treasure in the middle of his journey.

Beyond those overcome with conviction and distress, I have lately seen many whose bodily strength has been taken away by a sense of the glorious excellency of the Redeemer, and the wonders of His dying love — accompanied by a very unusual sense of their own littleness and exceeding unworthiness, along with all the expressions and appearances of the deepest abasement and self-abhorrence. And not only new converts, but many who were, as we hope, previously converted — whose love and joy have been attended with a flood of tears and a great appearance of contrition

and humiliation, especially for having lived so little to God's glory since their conversion. They have had a far greater sight of their own vileness and the evil of their hearts than ever before, with an intensely earnest desire to live better going forward, yet attended with greater distrust of themselves than ever. And many have been entirely overcome with compassion for the souls of others, and longing for their salvation.

And many other things I might mention in this extraordinary work, answering to every one of the marks that have been discussed. So if the apostle John knew how to give signs of a work of the true Spirit, this is such a work.

God's providence has placed me in a location where His work has previously been carried on. I had the blessing of being settled in that place for two years with the venerable Stoddard, and became acquainted during that time with a number who were affected under his ministry, and have been closely acquainted with the experiences of many others who were affected before under his ministry — in a manner consistent with his doctrine and the doctrine of all orthodox theologians. Of late that work has been carried on there with very much of these unusual effects; but it is clear to all that it is the same work — not only as what was carried on there six or seven years ago, but older Christians there recognize it as the same work that was carried on under their former pastor's ministry, though there are some new circumstances. Certainly we must set aside all talk of conversion and Christian experience — and not only that, but also set aside our Bibles and give up revealed religion altogether — if this is not in general the work of God. I do not mean that the degree of the Spirit's influence is to be

measured by the degree of its effects on people's bodies, or that those experiences which most powerfully affect the body are always the best.

As for the imprudences, errors, and mixture of delusion that have occurred, it is not at all surprising that a reformation — following a long and nearly universal spiritual deadness — should at its first outbreak be attended with such things. In the first creation, God did not make a complete world all at once. There was a great deal of imperfection, darkness, and a mixture of chaos and confusion after God first said, Let there be light, before the whole stood forth in perfect form. When God first began His great work of deliverance for His people after their long bondage in Egypt, false wonders were mixed with true for a time, which hardened the unbelieving Egyptians and caused them to doubt the divine origin of the entire work. When the children of Israel first set about bringing up the ark of God, after it had long been neglected and had long been absent, they sought not the Lord after the due order — 1 Chronicles 15:13. At the time when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them. And Solomon's ships, when they brought gold and silver and pearls, also brought apes and peacocks. When daylight first appears after a night of darkness, we must expect darkness to be mixed with light for a time, and not expect perfect day with the sun fully risen all at once. The fruits of the earth are first green before they are ripe, and come to their proper perfection gradually. And Christ tells us the kingdom of God is the same, in Mark 4:26-28: So is the kingdom of God; as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day; and the seed

should spring and grow up, he does not know how; for the earth produces fruit by itself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

The imprudences and errors that have accompanied this work are the less surprising when we consider that it is chiefly young people who have been the subjects of it — people who have less stability and experience, are in the heat of youth, and are much more prone to run to extremes. Satan will keep people in spiritual complacency as long as he can; but when he can no longer do that, he often tries to drive them to extremes, to dishonor God and damage religion in that way. And doubtless one cause of much of the misconduct has been that in many places, people who are subjects of this work of God's Spirit clearly see that their ministers have a poor opinion of the work. With good reason, they dare not turn to those ministers as their guides in it, and so are left without guidance. It is no wonder that when a people are like sheep without a shepherd, they wander off the path. People in such circumstances especially need constant guidance, and their guides need far more wisdom than they possess on their own. And even if a people have ministers who favor the work and rejoice in it, we should not expect either people or ministers to know as well how to conduct themselves in such an extraordinary state of affairs — while it is new and unlike anything they have experienced before — as they may after experience and time to observe the tendencies, consequences, and outcomes of things. The beneficial influence of experience is very evident today in the people among whom God has placed me. The work of God carried on there this year has been much purer than that which was carried on there six years before. It has appeared more purely spiritual, freer from natural and cor-

rupt mixtures and from anything savoring of enthusiastic wildness and extravagance. It has worked more through deep humiliation and self-abasement before God and people, and they have been much freer from imprudences and irregularities. And there has been a remarkable difference in this particular: whereas many before, in their seasons of comfort and rejoicing, were too ready to forget the proper reverence owed to God, and in their conversations with one another about the things of God and their own experiences were apt to speak with too much levity and even laughter, they now seem to have no inclination toward this at all. They rejoice with a more solemn, reverent, humble joy — as God directs the princes of the earth in Psalm 2:11. This is not because the joy is less great — indeed in many of them it is much greater. Many among us who were affected in that former season have now received far greater communications from heaven than they had then. But their rejoicing operates in a different manner: it only abases and solemnizes them, breaks their hearts, and brings them into the dust. Now when they speak of their joys, it is not with laughter but with a flood of tears. Those who laughed before now weep; and yet by their united testimony, their joy is vastly purer and sweeter than what before more stirred their animal spirits. They are now more like Jacob when God appeared to him at Bethel, when he saw the ladder that reached to heaven and said, How awesome is this place; and like Moses when God showed him His glory on the mountain, when he made haste and bowed himself to the earth.

2. Let us all therefore be warned by no means to oppose, or do anything in the slightest to hinder the work that has lately been carried on in the land, but on the contrary to do our utmost to ad-

vance it. Now that Christ has come down from heaven into this land in a remarkable and wonderful work of His Spirit, it is fitting that all His professing disciples should acknowledge Him and give Him honor.

The example of the Jews in Christ's and the apostles' time is enough to put great fear into those who do not acknowledge this work, and to make them extremely cautious about what they say or do. When Christ was in the world, the world did not know Him. He came to His own professing people, and His own did not receive Him. That coming of Christ had been much spoken of in the prophecies of Scripture which they had in their hands, had long been expected, and yet because Christ came in a manner they did not expect — one that did not suit their worldly reasoning — they would not own Him. Instead they opposed Him, called Him a madman, and attributed the Spirit He worked by to the spirit of the Devil. They stood and marveled at the great things being done and did not know what to make of them. But they encountered so many stumbling blocks that in the end they could not acknowledge Him. And when the Spirit of God was so wonderfully poured out in the apostles' days, they regarded it as confusion and frenzy. They were astonished at what they saw and heard but were not convinced. And the work of God was especially rejected by those who were most proud of their own understanding and knowledge — in keeping with Isaiah 29:14: Therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden. And many of those who had been regarded as religious and devout felt a deep hostility toward the work because they saw that it tended to dimin-

ish their honor and expose their formalism and lukewarmness. Some of them maliciously and openly opposed and reproached the work of the Spirit of God, calling it the work of the Devil against their own inward convictions, and so became guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit.

There is another coming of Christ — a spiritual coming to establish His kingdom in the world — that is spoken of as frequently in Scripture prophecy as that first coming of Christ, and that has long been awaited by the church of God. From what is said of it, we have reason to think it will be, in many respects, parallel with the other. And certainly the low state to which the visible church of God has lately sunk is very parallel to the state of the Jewish church when Christ came. Therefore it is no wonder at all that when Christ comes, His work would appear strange to most people. Indeed it would be a wonder if it were otherwise. Whether the work now being carried on is the beginning of that great coming of Christ to establish His kingdom, spoken of so much in Scripture, or not — it is evident from what has been said that it is a work of the same Spirit and of the same nature. And there is every reason to believe that for people to continue long in refusing to acknowledge Christ in this work — especially those who are set as teachers in His church — will be just as offensive to God as it was for the Jews of old to refuse to acknowledge Christ. This remains true despite all the stumbling blocks they may point to and all the reasons they claim to have for doubting the work. The teachers of the Jewish church found countless stumbling blocks that they considered insurmountable. Many things appeared in Christ, and in the work of the Spirit after His ascension, that were deeply perplexing to them. They were sure they had just cause for their reservations.

Christ and His work were to the Jews a stumbling block. But blessed is he, says Christ, who is not offended — or stumbled — in me. As strange and unexpected as the manner of Christ's appearing was, yet He had not been long in Judea working miracles before all those who had opportunity to observe but refused to acknowledge Him brought fearful guilt upon themselves in the sight of God. Christ condemned them, saying that though they could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, yet they could not discern the signs of these times; and why, He said, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? — Luke 12, near the end.

It is not to be supposed that the great God has bowed the heavens and come down into this land — appearing here now for so long a time in such a glorious work of His power and grace, so extensive in its scope, in the most public places in the land and in almost every part of it — without giving such evidence of His presence that large numbers, including many teachers in His church, cannot remain innocent in His sight by continuing to refuse to receive and acknowledge Him, give Him honor, and appear to rejoice in His gracious presence. Nor can they remain innocent without at least once giving Him thanks for so glorious and blessed a work of His grace — a work in which His goodness is more fully displayed than if He had given us all the material blessings the world could offer. A long and continued silence in such a case is undoubtedly provoking to God, especially in ministers. It is a quiet kind of opposition that genuinely tends to hinder the work. Silent ministers stand in the way of the work of God, as Christ said of old: He who is not with Me is against Me. Those who stand marveling at this strange work of God — not knowing what to make of it, refusing to receive it, and sometimes ready to speak contemptuously of it, as

the Jews of old did — would do well to consider and tremble at the words of Paul in Acts 13:40-41: Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though a man declares it to you. And those who cannot believe the work to be genuine because of its extraordinary degree and manner should consider how it was with the unbelieving lord in Samaria who said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, could this thing be? — to whom Elisha said: Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it. Let all to whom this work is a cloud and darkness — as the pillar of cloud and fire was to the Egyptians — take heed that it not be their destruction, as that was the Egyptians' destruction, while it gave light to God's Israel.

I would ask those who quiet themselves by claiming to proceed on a principle of prudence — waiting to see what the outcome of things will be and what fruit those who are subjects of this work will bring forth in their lives and conduct — to consider whether this justifies a long refusal to acknowledge Christ when He appears so wonderfully and graciously present in the land. It is likely that many who are waiting in this manner do not know what they are waiting for. If they wait to see a work of God without difficulties and stumbling blocks, that is like the fool who waits beside the river for all the water to flow by. A work of God without stumbling blocks is never to be expected. It must needs be that offenses come. There has never yet been any great manifestation of God to the world that was not attended with many difficulties. It is with the works of God as it is with the word of God — both are full of things that seem strange, inconsistent, and difficult to the worldly

and unbelieving hearts of people. Christ and His work always have been and always will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, a snare and a trap to many. The prophet Hosea, in the last chapter of his prophecy — speaking of a glorious revival of religion in God's church, when God would be as the dew to Israel, and Israel would grow as the lily and send its roots down as Lebanon, and his branches would spread, and so on — concludes with these words in the last verse: Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is discerning? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.

It is likely that the stumbling blocks attending this work will in some respects increase rather than diminish. We will probably see more instances of those falling away and committing gross sin among those who profess to be affected. And if one kind of stumbling block is removed, others will take its place. It is with Christ's works as it was with His parables: things that are difficult to people's darkened minds are arranged by design, for the testing of people's dispositions and spiritual understanding, and so that people of corrupt minds — with an unbelieving, contentious spirit — seeing might see and not understand. Those who are now waiting to see how things turn out think they will be better able to judge by and by, but many of them are probably mistaken. The Jews who saw Christ's miracles waited for better evidence of His being the Messiah; they wanted a sign from heaven. But they waited in vain. Their stumbling blocks did not diminish but increased; they found no end to them and so became more and more hardened in their unbelief. Many have prayed for the glorious reformation spoken of

in Scripture without knowing what they were praying for — as it was with the Jews when they prayed for the coming of Christ. If it came, they would not acknowledge or receive it.

This claimed prudence of persons in waiting so long before they acknowledge this work will probably in the end prove to be the greatest imprudence — in that they will thereby miss any share in so great a blessing, and will lose the most precious opportunity of obtaining divine light, grace, comfort, and heavenly and eternal benefit that God has ever given in New England. While the glorious fountain is set open in so wonderful a manner, and multitudes flock to it and receive a rich supply for the needs of their souls, they stand at a distance doubting and wondering, receiving nothing, and are likely to remain so until the precious season has passed.

It is remarkable that those who have doubted this work — attended as it has been with such widespread and extraordinary appearances — have been content to remain in their doubts without taking thorough pains to inform themselves. They have not gone where such things were occurring to see them closely, observe them carefully, and inquire into them diligently. They have not contented themselves only with observing two or three instances, nor persisted until they were fully informed by their own observation. I have no doubt that if this course had been taken, it would have convinced all whose minds are not closed against conviction, to a very great degree. How greatly have those erred who, based only on uncertain reports from others, have ventured to speak dismissively of these things? The caution of an unbelieving Jew might teach them more wisdom — Acts 5:38-39: Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work is of men, it will

come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest perhaps you be found to fight against God. Whether what has been said in this discourse is enough to convince all who have heard it that the work now being carried on in the land is the work of God or not, I hope that for the future they will at least heed the caution of Gamaliel just mentioned. Going forward, let them not oppose it, or say anything against it, or anything that has even an indirect tendency to bring it into disrepute, lest they be found to be opponents of the Holy Spirit. There is no kind of sin so harmful and dangerous to the souls of people as sins committed against the Holy Spirit. We would do better to speak against God the Father or the Son than to speak against the Holy Spirit in His gracious work on the hearts of people. Nothing will so effectively prevent us from ever benefiting from His work in our own souls.

If there are any who will still persist in speaking contemptuously of these things, I would urge them to beware lest they be guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. A time when the Holy Spirit is greatly poured out — when people's lusts, lukewarmness, and hypocrisy are exposed by His powerful working — is the most likely time of all for this sin to be committed. If the work goes on, it is well to consider whether, among the many who show hostility toward it and reproach it, some may not be guilty of this sin — if none have been already. Those who maliciously oppose and reproach this work and call it the work of the Devil lack only one thing to make their sin unpardonable, and that is doing it against inward conviction. And though some are now cautious enough not to openly oppose and reproach the work, yet it is to be feared that at this day — when the Lord is going forth so gloriously against His enemies — many who are silent and inactive, especially

ministers, will bring upon themselves that curse of the Angel of the Lord in Judges 5:23: Curse Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord; curse its inhabitants bitterly, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Since the great God has come down from heaven and manifested Himself in so wonderful a manner in this land, it is vain for any of us to expect anything other than to be greatly affected by it in our spiritual condition — one way or another, in terms of God's favor. Those who are not made more blessed by it will become far more guilty and miserable. This is always the pattern: a season that proves an acceptable year and a time of great grace and favor to those who receive and make use of it, proves a day of vengeance to others — Isaiah 61:2. When God sends forth His word it shall not return to Him empty; how much less His Spirit. When Christ was on earth in Judea, many slighted and neglected Him, but it ultimately proved to be no matter of indifference for them. God made all that people feel that Christ had been among them. Those who did not feel it in comfort felt it in sorrow, and with a witness. When God merely sent the prophet Ezekiel to the children of Israel, He declared that whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, yet they would know that there had been a prophet among them. How much more may we expect that when God has appeared so wonderfully in this land, He will make everyone know that the great God has been in New England.

I come now to the

third and last part — addressed to those who are friends of this work, have shared in it, and are zealous to advance it. Let me earnestly urge such people to give diligent attention to themselves, to avoid all errors and misconduct, and to avoid whatever may dim

and obscure the work and give occasion to those who are ready to reproach it. The apostle was careful to cut off occasion from those who were looking for occasion. The same apostle urged Titus to maintain such careful watch over himself that both his preaching and his behavior would be beyond reproach — so that those opposed might be put to shame, having nothing evil to say against them — Titus 2:7-8. We need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. It matters greatly that we conduct ourselves innocently and wisely at this day. We must expect that the great enemy of this work will use his utmost effort especially against us. He will especially triumph if he can gain any advantage over any of us — to blind or mislead us — for he knows it will do more to advance his purpose and interest than if he prevailed against a hundred others. We need to watch and pray, for we are but little children; this roaring lion is too strong for us, and this old serpent is too subtle for us.

Humility, self-distrust, and an entire dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ will be our best defense. Let us therefore keep the strictest watch against spiritual pride — against being lifted up with extraordinary experiences, comforts, and high favors from heaven that any of us may have received. After such favors, we especially need to keep a watchful, suspicious eye on our own hearts, lest self-exalting reflections arise on what we have received, and we begin to think highly of ourselves as now being among the most eminent saints and special favorites of heaven — as those to whom the secret of the Lord is especially revealed, and who above all others are fitted to be the great instructors and censors of this evil generation. In a proud conceit of our own wisdom and discernment, we might naturally begin to assume the manner of prophets

or extraordinary ambassadors of heaven. When God has made great discoveries of Himself to our souls, we should not shine bright in our own eyes. Moses, when he had been conversing with God on the mountain — though his face shone so as to dazzle the eyes of Aaron and the people — did not shine in his own eyes; he did not know that his face shone. Let no one think themselves free from danger of spiritual pride, even in their best and highest moments. God saw that the apostle Paul — though probably the most eminent saint who ever lived — was not free from this danger, even immediately after he had been conversing with God in the third heaven. See 2 Corinthians 12:7. Pride is the worst viper in the heart. It is the first sin that ever entered the universe, and it lies deepest of all at the foundation of the whole structure of sin. It is the most hidden, deceptive, and untraceable in its ways of working of any lust whatsoever — always ready to mix with everything. Nothing is so hateful to God, so contrary to the spirit of the gospel, or of such dangerous consequence. And there is no other single sin that so much lets the Devil into the hearts of the saints and exposes them to his delusions. I have seen this in many instances, including in eminent saints. The Devil has come in through this door immediately after some exceptional experience or extraordinary communion with God, terribly deluding and leading them astray, until God mercifully opened their eyes and delivered them. They themselves afterward recognized that it was pride that had betrayed them.

Some true friends of the work of God's Spirit have erred by giving too much weight to impulses and strong impressions on their minds, treating them as though they were direct signals from heaven about things that would come to pass, or about what God's

will was for them to do — things not signified or revealed anywhere in the Bible without those impulses. These impressions, if they are truly from the Spirit of God, are of an entirely different nature from the gracious influences of the Spirit on the hearts of the saints. They are of the nature of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and are properly inspiration — such as the prophets and apostles and others had of old — which the apostle distinguishes from the grace of the Spirit in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians.

One reason why some have been quick to place weight on such impulses is an opinion they have held — that the glory of the approaching blessed days of the church would partly consist in the restoration of those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. This opinion, I believe, arises partly from a failure to carefully consider and compare the nature and value of the two kinds of the Spirit's influences, namely His ordinary gracious influences and His extraordinary influences in inspiration and miraculous gifts. The former are by far the most excellent and glorious, as the apostle shows at length in 1 Corinthians beginning with the thirty-first verse of the twelfth chapter. Speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he says: But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I show you a more excellent way. That is, a more excellent way of the Spirit's influence. Then he goes on in the next chapter to show what that more excellent way is — namely the grace of the Spirit, which consists chiefly in charity, or divine love. Throughout that chapter he shows the great superiority of that over inspiration. God communicates Himself in His own nature more fully to the soul through saving grace in the heart than through all miraculous gifts. The blessed image of God consists in saving grace, not in those gifts. The excel-

lence, happiness, and glory of the soul consist immediately in saving grace, not in those gifts. Saving grace is a root that bears infinitely more excellent fruit. Salvation and the eternal enjoyment of God are promised to divine grace, but not to inspiration. A person may have those extraordinary gifts and yet be abominable to God and go to hell. The spiritual and eternal life of the soul consists not in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit but in the grace of the Spirit. It is saving grace, and not those gifts, that God bestows only on His favorites and dear children. He has sometimes given those gifts to people as unworthy as dogs and swine, as He did to Balaam, Saul, and Judas — and to some in the primitive times of the Christian church who committed the unpardonable sin, as seen in Hebrews 6. Many wicked people at the day of judgment will plead: Have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name done many mighty works? The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace in their hearts was a thousand times more their dignity and honor than their miraculous gifts. The things David comforts himself with in the book of Psalms are not his being a king or a prophet, but the holy influences of the Spirit of God in his heart, communicating to him divine light, love, and joy. The apostle Paul abounded in visions, revelations, and miraculous gifts above all the apostles, and yet he counted all things as loss for the excellence of the spiritual knowledge of Christ. It was not the gifts but the grace of the apostles that was the proper evidence of their names being written in heaven — the thing Christ directs them to rejoice in far more than in the demons being subject to them. To have grace in the heart is a higher privilege than even what the blessed virgin herself had in

having the body of the second person of the Trinity conceived in her womb by the power of the Highest overshadowing her. See Luke 11:27-28: And it came to pass as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You! But He said, Yes, rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it. See also to the same purpose Matthew 12:47 and following.

The influence of the Holy Spirit — divine charity in the heart — is the greatest privilege and glory of the highest archangel in heaven. Indeed, it is the very thing by which the creature has fellowship with God Himself, with the Father and the Son, in their beauty and happiness; and by it creatures are made partakers of the divine nature and have Christ's joy fulfilled in themselves.

The ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God are the ultimate end of all extraordinary gifts, as the apostle shows in Ephesians 4:11-13. Those gifts are of no value beyond their service to this end; apart from this end they will not merely fail to profit anyone but will only make their condemnation worse. This, as the apostle observes, is the most excellent way for God to communicate His Spirit to His church — it is the greatest glory of the church in all ages. This glory is what makes the state of the church on earth most resemble the state of the church in heaven, where prophecy and tongues and other miraculous gifts have ceased and vanished away, and God communicates His Spirit only in that more excellent way the apostle describes — namely charity, or divine love, which never fails. Therefore the glory of the approaching blessed state of the church does not require these extraordinary gifts at all. As that state of the church will be the nearest to its per-

fect heavenly state of any state it will reach on earth, I believe it will resemble heaven in this as well — that all extraordinary gifts will have ceased and vanished away, and all those stars and moon with their reflected light given in the night or in a dark season will be swallowed up in the sun of divine love. The apostle speaks of those gifts of inspiration as childish things compared to the influence of the Spirit in divine love — things given to the church only to support it in its infancy, until the church had a complete and established written rule and all the ordinary means of grace were settled. But they were things that would cease as the church advanced beyond its childhood state, and would entirely vanish when the church arrived at the state of maturity, which will be in the approaching glorious times — above any other state of the church on earth. 1 Corinthians 13:11: When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. Compared with the three preceding verses.

When the apostle in this chapter speaks of prophecies, tongues, and revelations ceasing and vanishing from the church when the Christian church advances from a state of immaturity to a state of maturity, he seems to have in view its arrival at a mature state in this world as well as in heaven. He speaks of such an adult state — a state of maturity — in which those three things, faith, hope, and charity, would remain after miracles and revelations had ceased, as you may see in the last verse: And now abides faith, hope, charity — these three. The apostle's manner of speaking here shows a clear reference to what he had just been saying, and there is a plain contrast between the remaining spoken of here and the failing, ceasing, and vanishing away spoken of in verse 8. The

apostle had been showing how all those gifts of inspiration — the leading-strings of the Christian church in its infancy — would vanish away when the church came to maturity. Having finished that point, he then returns to note what things would remain after those had failed and ceased, and he identifies three: faith, hope, and charity. Therefore the adult state of the church he speaks of is the more perfect state it will arrive at in this world — a state that will reach its highest expression in that glorious condition the church will be brought to in the latter ages of the world. This observation was all the more fitting for the church at Corinth on two accounts. First, the apostle had already noted to that church that they were in a state of infancy — chapter 3:1-2. Second, that church appears to have abounded above all others in miraculous gifts. When the expected glorious state of the church arrives, the increase of light will be so great that it will in some respect answer what is said in verse 12 about seeing face to face. See Isaiah 24:23 and 25:7.

Therefore I do not expect a restoration of these miraculous gifts in the approaching glorious times of the church, nor do I desire it. It appears to me that such a restoration would add nothing to the glory of those times, but would rather diminish it. For my own part, I would rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit showing Christ's spiritual and divine beauty, His infinite grace and dying love — drawing out the holy exercises of faith and divine love and sweet contentment and humble joy in God — for one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetic visions and revelations for a whole year. It appears to me far more likely that God should have given immediate revelations to His saints in the dark times of Popery than now, in the approach of the most glorious and perfect

state of His church on earth. It does not appear to me that there is any need for those extraordinary gifts to introduce this blessed state and establish the kingdom of God throughout the world. I have seen so much of the power of God working in a more excellent way as to convince me that God can easily accomplish it without them.

I therefore urge the people of God to be very cautious about giving weight to such impulses. I have seen them fail in very many instances. I know by experience that an impression being made with great power on the mind of a true saint — even an eminent saint — immediately after, or even in the midst of, extraordinary seasons of grace and sweet communion with God, and attended by texts of Scripture strongly impressed on the mind, is no sure sign that it is a revelation from heaven. I have known such impressions fail and prove false in their outcome, in some instances attended with all these circumstances. I know that those who leave the sure word of prophecy God has given us as a light shining in a dark place — to follow such impressions and impulses — are leaving the guidance of the north star to follow a will-o'-the-wisp. No wonder, then, that they are sometimes led on a dreadful course and into terrible extravagances.

And since inspiration is not to be expected, let us not despise human learning. Those who say human learning is of little or no use in the work of the ministry do not consider what they are saying; if they did, they would not say it. By human learning I mean — and suppose others mean — the improvement of the common knowledge people have through ordinary human and outward means. To say that human learning is of no use is as much as to say that the education of a child or the common knowledge that a

grown person has beyond a small child is of no use. That would mean a four-year-old child, with the same degree of grace, is as fit to be a teacher in the church of God and as capable of advancing the kingdom of Christ by his instruction as a very knowledgeable and understanding person of thirty years of age. If adult persons have greater ability and advantage for service because they have more knowledge than a small child, then clearly even more knowledge — with the same degree of grace — would give still greater ability and advantage for service. Greater knowledge undoubtedly increases a person's advantage either to do good or harm, depending on the direction of his heart. It is too plain to be denied that God made great use of human learning in the apostle Paul, as He did in Moses and Solomon.

And if knowledge gained through ordinary means is not to be despised, it follows that the means of gaining it are not to be neglected — namely, study — and that this is of great value in preparation for publicly instructing others. It is true that having a heart full of the powerful influences of the Spirit of God may at times enable people to speak profitably and even excellently without study. But this does not warrant us to needlessly throw ourselves from the pinnacle of the temple, depending on the angel of the Lord to bear us up and keep our foot from striking a stone — when there is another way down, even if it is not as quick. I would also urge that orderly structure in public discourses — which greatly aids both understanding and memory — not be entirely neglected.

Another thing I would urge the dear children of God to think through more fully is how far, and on what grounds, the rules of the holy Scriptures will truly justify their passing judgment on other professing Christians as hypocrites who are ignorant of any

real religion. We all know that there is some kind of judging and condemning that Scripture very often and very strictly forbids. I would ask that these scriptural rules be looked into and carefully weighed, and that it be considered whether taking it upon ourselves to assess the spiritual condition of others and pass sentence upon professing Christians — those with a good outward life — as wicked people is not in fact forbidden by Christ in the New Testament. If it is, then the disciples of Christ ought to avoid it, however capable they may think themselves of it, or however necessary or beneficial they may believe it to be. It is clear that whatever kind of judging God claims as His own prerogative is forbidden to us. We know that a certain judging of the hearts of the children of men is often spoken of as the great prerogative of God alone — as in 1 Kings 8:39: Forgive, and act, and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know; for You, even You only, know the hearts of all the children of men. And if we examine carefully, we will find that the judging of hearts spoken of as God's prerogative is not only the judging of the motives and dispositions behind particular actions, but chiefly the judging of the spiritual state of professing believers with respect to their profession. This will be very clear from looking over the following Scriptures: 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 7:9-11; Psalm 26 throughout; Proverbs 16:2 and 17:3 and 21:2; John 2:23-25; Revelation 2:22-23. That kind of judging which is God's proper prerogative is forbidden, as in Romans 14:4: Who are you that judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. James 4:12: There is one law-giver who is able to save and to destroy; who are you to judge an-

other? 1 Corinthians 4:3-4: But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or by man's judgment; yes, I do not even judge myself; for he who judges me is the Lord.

Furthermore, whatever kind of judging is the proper work and task of the day of judgment is a judging we are also forbidden to do — as in 1 Corinthians 4:5: Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes; who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the purposes of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God. But to distinguish hypocrites — those who have the outward form of godliness and the visible life of godly people — from true saints; to separate the sheep from the goats — that is the proper business of the day of judgment, and is in fact represented as the main business and purpose of that great day. Those who take it upon themselves to positively determine who is sincere and who is not, to draw the dividing line between true saints and hypocrites, to separate and sort them — setting the one on the right and the other on the left, and distinguishing and pulling the weeds from among the wheat — greatly err. Many of the servants of the owner of the field are very ready to think themselves capable of this and are quick to offer their services to that end. But their Lord says: No, lest while you gather the weeds you root up the wheat also. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will take care to see a thorough separation made — Matthew 13:28-30. This agrees with the prohibition of the apostle in 1 Corinthians 4:5: Judge nothing before the time. In this parable, the servants who have the care of the fruit of the field are doubtless the same as the servants who have the care of the fruit of the vineyard in Luke 20, and those elsewhere described as servants of the Lord of the harvest, ap-

pointed as workers in his harvest — which we know refers to ministers of the gospel. Now this parable in Matthew 13 is being fulfilled. While men slept — during that long, drowsy, dead season in the church — the enemy sowed weeds. Now is the time when the blade has sprung up and religion is reviving. Now some of the servants who have the care of the field say: Let us go and gather the weeds. I know from experience that men who think they have had some experience of the power of religion tend to consider themselves capable of discerning and judging the spiritual condition of others from a brief conversation with them. Experience has taught me that this is an error. I once did not imagine that the human heart was as unsearchable as I now find it to be. I am less ready to be charitable and less ready to be uncharitable than I once was. I find more things in wicked people that can counterfeit and create a convincing appearance of piety, and more ways that the remaining corruption of the godly can make them appear like carnal people, formalists, and dead hypocrites, than I once knew of. The longer I live, the less I wonder that God claims it as His own prerogative to test the hearts of the children of men, and has directed that this business be left alone until the harvest. I find that God is wiser than people. I desire to adore the wisdom of God and His goodness to me and my fellow creatures, that He has not committed this great business into the hands of such a poor, weak, dim-sighted creature as I am — of so much blindness, pride, partiality, prejudice, and deceitfulness of heart — but has committed it into the hands of One infinitely more fitted for it, and has made it His own prerogative.

The accounts some people give of their experiences are deeply satisfying — the kind that forbid and drive away any thought that they could be anything other than precious children of God, and that seem to require full confidence. Yet we must allow the Scriptures to stand firm in their repeated declaration that everything in the saint that belongs to the spiritual and divine life is hidden. Their life is said to be hidden — Colossians 3:3-4. Their food is the hidden manna; they have food to eat that others do not know of; a stranger does not share in their joy. The heart in which they possess their divine and distinctive adornments is the hidden man — seen only by God — 1 Peter 3:4. Their new name, which Christ has given them, no one knows except the one who receives it — Revelation 2:17. The praise of the true Israelites, whose circumcision is that of the heart, is not of men but of God — Romans 2:29. That is, they can be truly and certainly recognized and acknowledged as Israelites — and receive the honor belonging to such — only by God, as appears from the same apostle's use of similar language in 1 Corinthians 4:5. Speaking there of it being God's prerogative to judge who are genuine Christians — which He will do at the day of judgment — he adds: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The case of Judas is remarkable: though he had been so long among the rest of the disciples — all of them people of true experience — none ever seemed to have thought him anything other than a true disciple, until he revealed himself through his scandalous act.

And the case of Ahithophel is also very striking. David did not discern his true character — though David was so wise and holy a man, a person of great experience and theological depth, deeply fa-

miliar with the Scriptures, knowing more than all his teachers and more than the ancients, mature in judgment, a great prophet — and though David was intimately acquainted with Ahithophel, his closest friend and most trusted companion in religious and spiritual matters. David not only never discovered Ahithophel to be a hypocrite, but relied on him as a true saint. He felt the warmth and sweetness of Ahithophel's religious conversation, and counted him an eminent man of God, making him his closest counselor in matters of the soul above any other man. Yet he was not only no saint, but a notoriously wicked man — a murderous and vile wretch. Psalm 55:11-14: Wickedness is in the midst of it; deceit and guile do not depart from its streets. For it was not an enemy who reproached me — then I could have borne it. Neither was it one who hated me who exalted himself against me — then I could have hidden myself from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my guide and my companion. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company.

To suppose that people have the ability and right to determine the spiritual condition of visible Christians — and so to make an open separation between saints and hypocrites, such that true saints form one visible company and hypocrites another, divided by a line that people draw — involves an inconsistency. It supposes that God has given people the power to create another visible church within His visible church. Visible Christians — those of God's visible church — can mean nothing other than the company of those who are Christians or saints visibly, that is, who have a right to be received as such in the eyes of public charity. No one

has the right to exclude anyone from this visible church except through the regular church process that God has established in His visible church.

I urge those who have a true zeal for advancing the work of God that He has begun in this land to consider these things carefully. I am persuaded that as many of them as have much to do with souls — if they do not heed me now — will come to hold the same view after they have had more experience.

Another thing I would urge the zealous friends of this glorious work of God to avoid is managing the controversy with opponents with too much heat and with the appearance of angry zeal — and particularly dwelling at length in public prayer and preaching on the persecution they face from opponents. If their opposition were ten times as severe as it is, I think it would still not be best to speak of it so much. Christians should be like lambs — not quick to complain and cry out when hurt; silent and not opening their mouths, following the example of our dear Redeemer. They should not be like animals that scream loudly at the slightest touch. We should not be ready to call for fire from heaven when the Samaritans oppose us and refuse to receive us into their villages. God's zealous ministers would do well to take to heart the direction the apostle Paul gave to a zealous minister in 2 Timothy 2:24-26: And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if perhaps God will grant them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Another thing I would humbly recommend to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and desire to advance His kingdom is careful attention to that excellent rule of wisdom Christ has given us in Matthew 9:16-17: No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment and a worse tear is made. Neither do people put new wine into old wineskins, or the wineskins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved. I am afraid the wine is running out in some parts of this land for want of attention to this rule. Though I believe we have confined ourselves too narrowly to certain set forms and methods in conducting our religious affairs — which has had a tendency to make all our religion degenerate into mere formalism — yet anything that has the appearance of a great innovation, tending to shock and disturb people's minds and set them talking and disputing, greatly hinders the advance of the power of religion. It stirs up opposition in some, diverts the attention of others, and troubles the minds of many with doubts and scruples, causing people to swerve from their great business and turn aside to pointless controversy. Therefore anything that departs substantially from common practice, unless it is in itself of considerable importance, is better avoided. In this we will follow the example of the one who had the greatest success in spreading the power of religion in the world of any person who ever lived — as he himself describes in 1 Corinthians 9:20-23: To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those under the law, as under the law, so that I might win those under the law; to those outside the law, as outside the law — though not being outside God's law but under Christ's law — so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I be-

came weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. And I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Finis.

THANKS FOR READING



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