

Introduction to Spiritual Theology

Resources

Jonathan Edwards

The Christian Pilgrim

“And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.” -- Hebrews 11:13, 14

Subject: This life ought so to be spent by us as to be only a journey towards heaven.

The apostle is here setting forth the excellencies of the grace of faith, by the glorious effects and happy issue of it in the saints of the Old Testament. He had spoken in the preceding part of the chapter particularly, of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. Having enumerated those instances, he takes notice that “these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers,” etc. — In these words the apostle seems to have a more particular respect to Abraham and Sarah, and their kindred, who came with them from Haran, and from Ur of the Chaldees, as appears by the 15th verse, where the apostle says, “and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.”

Two things may be observed here:

1. What these saints confessed of themselves, *viz. that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* — Thus we have a particular account concerning Abraham, “I am a stranger and a sojourner with you.” (Gen. 23:4) And it seems to have been the general sense of the patriarchs, by what Jacob says to Pharaoh. “And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of years of my life been, and have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” (Gen. 47:9) “I am a stranger and a sojourner with thee, as all my fathers were.” (Psa. 39:12)

2. The inference that the apostle draws from hence, *viz. that they sought another country as their home.* “For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.” In confessing that they were strangers, they plainly declared that this is not their country; that this is not the place where they are at home. And in confessing themselves to be pilgrims, they declared plainly that this is not their settled abode, but that they have respect to some other country, which they seek, and to which they are traveling.

SECTION I

That this life ought to be so spent by us, as to be only a journey or pilgrimage towards heaven.

HERE I would observe,

1. That we ought not to rest in the world and its enjoyments, but should desire heaven. We should “seek first the kingdom of God.” (Mat. 6:33) We ought above all things to desire a heavenly happiness; to be with God and dwell with Jesus Christ. Though surrounded with outward enjoyments, and settled in families with desirable friends and relations; though we have companions whose society is delightful, and children in whom we see many promising qualifications; though we live by good neighbors, and are generally beloved where

known; we ought not to take our rest in these things as our portion. We should be so far from resting in them, that we should desire to leave them all, in God's due time. We ought to possess, enjoy and use them, with no other view but readily to quit them, whenever we are called to it, and to change them willingly and cheerfully for heaven.

A traveler is not wont to rest in what he meets with, however comfortable and pleasing, on the road. If he passes through pleasant places, flowery meadows, or shady groves, he does not take up his content in these things, but only takes a transient view of them as he goes along. He is not enticed by fine appearances to put off the thought of proceeding. No, but his journey's end is in his mind. If he meets with comfortable accommodations at an inn, he entertains no thoughts of settling there. He considers that these things are not his own, that he is but a stranger, and when he has refreshed himself, or tarried for a night, he is for going forward. And it is pleasant to him to think that so much of the way is gone.

So should we desire heaven more than the comforts and enjoyments of this life. The apostle mentions it as an encouraging, comfortable consideration to Christians, that they draw nearer their happiness. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." — Our hearts ought to be loose to these things, as that of a man on a journey, that we may as cheerfully part with them whenever God calls. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. 7:29-31) These things are only lent to us for a little while, to serve a present turn, but we should set our *hearts* on heaven, as our inheritance forever.

2. We ought to seek heaven, by traveling in the way that leads thither. This is a way of holiness. We should choose and desire to travel thither in this way and in no other, and part with all those carnal appetites which, as weights, will tend to hinder us. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us." (Heb. 12:1) However pleasant the gratification of any appetite may be, we must lay it aside if it be a hindrance, or a stumbling block, in the way to heaven.

We should travel on in the way of obedience to all God's commands, even the difficult as well as the easy, denying all our sinful inclinations and interests. The way to heaven is ascending. We must be content to travel up hill, though it be hard and tiresome, and contrary to the natural bias of our flesh. We should follow Christ: the path he traveled, was the right way to heaven. We should take up our cross and follow him, in meekness and lowliness of heart, obedience and charity, diligence to do good, and patience under afflictions. The way to heaven is a heavenly life, an imitation of those who are in heaven in their holy enjoyments, loving, adoring, serving, and praising God and the Lamb. Even if we *could* go to heaven with the gratification of our lusts, we should prefer a way of holiness and conformity to the spiritual self-denying rules of the gospel.

3. We should travel on in this way in a laborious manner. — Long journeys are attended with toil and fatigue, especially if through a wilderness. Persons in such a case expect no other than to suffer hardships and weariness. — So we should travel in this way of holiness, improving our time and strength, to surmount the difficulties and obstacles that are in the way. The land we have to travel through, is a wilderness. There are many mountains, rocks, and rough places that we must go over, and therefore there is a necessity that we should lay out our strength.

4. Our whole lives ought to be spent in traveling this road. — We ought to begin *early*. This should be the *first* concern, when persons become capable of acting. When they first set out in the *world*, they should set out on *this* journey. — And we ought to travel on with *assiduity*. It ought to be the work of every day. We should

often think of our journey's end; and make it our daily work to travel on in the way that leads to it. — He who is on a journey is often thinking of the destined place, and it is his daily care and business to get along and to improve his time to get towards his journey's end. Thus should heaven be continually in our thoughts, and the immediate entrance or passage to it, *viz.* death, should be present with us. — We ought to *persevere* in this way as long as we live.

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Heb. 12:1) Though the road be difficult and toilsome, we must hold out with patience, and be content to endure hardships. Though the journey be long, yet we must not stop short, but hold on till we arrive at the place we seek. Nor should we be discouraged with the length and difficulties of the way, as the children of Israel were, and be for turning back again. All our thought and design should be to press forward till we arrive.

5. We ought to be continually growing in holiness, and in that respect coming nearer and nearer to heaven. — We should be endeavoring to come nearer to heaven, in being more heavenly, becoming more and more like the inhabitants of heaven in respect of holiness and conformity to God, the knowledge of God and Christ, in clear views of the glory of God, the beauty of Christ, and the excellency of divine things, as we come nearer to the beatific vision. — We should labor to be continually growing in divine love — that this may be an increasing flame in our hearts, till they ascend wholly in this flame — in obedience and a heavenly conversation, that we may do the will of God on earth as the angels do in heaven, in comfort and spiritual joy, [and] in sensible communion with God and Jesus Christ. Our path should be as “the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day.” (Pro. 4:18) We ought to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness: after an increase in righteousness. “As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (1 Pet. 2:2) The perfection of heaven should be our mark. “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13, 14)

6. All other concerns of life ought to be entirely subordinate to this. — When a man is on a journey, all the steps he takes are subordinated to the aim of getting to his journey's end. And if he carries money or provisions with him, it is to supply him in his journey. So we ought wholly to subordinate all our other business, and all our temporal enjoyments, to this affair of traveling to heaven. When anything we have becomes a clog and hindrance to us, we should quit it immediately. The use of our worldly enjoyments and possessions, should be with such a view, and in such a manner, as to further us in our way heavenward. Thus we should eat, and drink, and clothe ourselves, and improve the conversation and enjoyment of friends. And whatever business we are setting about, whatever design we are engaging in, we should inquire with ourselves, whether this business or undertaking will forward us in our way to heaven? And if not, we should quit our design.

SECTION II

Why the Christian's life is a journey, or pilgrimage?

1. THIS world is not our abiding place. Our continuance here is but very short. Man's days on the earth, are as a shadow. It was never designed by God that this world should be our home. Neither did God give us these temporal accommodations for that end. If God has given us ample estates, and children, or other pleasant friends, it is with no such design, that we should be furnished here, as for a settled abode, but with a design that we should use them for the present, and then leave them in a very little time. When we are called to any secular business, or charged with the care of a family, [and] if we improve our lives to any other purpose than as a journey toward heaven, all our labor will be lost. If we spend our lives in the pursuit of a temporal happiness,

as riches or sensual pleasures, credit and esteem from men, delight in our children and the prospect of seeing them well brought up and well settled, etc. — all these things will be of little significancy to us. Death will blow up all our hopes, and will put an end to these enjoyments. “The places that have known us, will know us no more” and “the eye that has seen us, shall see us no more.” We must be taken away forever from all these things, and it is uncertain when: it may be soon after we are put into the possession of them. And then, where will be all our worldly employments and enjoyments, when we are laid in the silent grave! “So man lieth down, and riseth not again, till the heavens be no more.” (Job 14:12)

2. The future world was designed to be our settled and everlasting abode. There it was intended that we should be fixed, and there alone is a lasting habitation and a lasting inheritance. The present state is short and transitory, but our state in the other world is everlasting. And as we are there at first, so we must be without change. Our state in the future world, therefore, being eternal, is of so much greater importance than our state here, that all our concerns in this world should be wholly subordinated to it.

3. Heaven is that place alone where our highest end and highest good is to be obtained. God hath made us for himself. “Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.” Therefore, then do we attain to our highest end, when we are brought to God: but that is by being brought to heaven, for that is God’s throne, the place of his special presence. There is but a very imperfect union with God to be had in this world, a very imperfect knowledge of him in the midst of much darkness: a very imperfect conformity to God, mingled with abundance of estrangement. Here we can serve and glorify God, but in a very imperfect manner: our service being mingled with sin, which dishonors God. — But when we get to heaven (if ever that be), we shall be brought to a perfect union with God and have more clear views of him. There we shall be fully conformed to God, without any remaining sin: for “we shall see him as he is.” There we shall serve God perfectly and glorify him in an exalted manner, even to the utmost of the powers and capacity of our nature. Then we shall perfectly give up ourselves to God: our hearts will be pure and holy offerings, presented in a flame of divine love.

God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. — To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is *infinitely* better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean. — Therefore it becomes us to spend this life only as a journey towards heaven, as it becomes us to make the seeking of our highest end and proper good, the whole work of our lives, to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for, or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end, and true happiness?

4. Our present state, and all that belongs to it, is designed by him that made all things, to be wholly in order to another world. — This world was made for a place of preparation for another. Man’s mortal life was given him, that he might be prepared for his fixed state. And all that God has here given us, is given to this purpose. The sun shines, the rain falls upon us, and the earth yields her increase to us for this end. Civil, ecclesiastical, and family affairs, and all our personal concerns, are designed and ordered in subordination to a future world, by the maker and disposer of all things. To this therefore they ought to be subordinated by us.

SECTION III

Instruction afforded by the consideration, that life is a journey or pilgrimage, towards heaven.

1. THIS doctrine may teach us moderation in our mourning for the loss of such dear friends, who while they lived, improved their lives to right purposes. If they lived a holy life, then their lives were a journey towards heaven. And why should we be immoderate in mourning, when they are got to their journey's end? Death, though it appears to us with a frightful aspect, is to them a great blessing. Their end is happy, and better than their beginning. "The day of their death, is better than the day of their birth." (Ecc. 7:1) While they lived, they desired heaven, and chose it above this world or any of its enjoyments. For this they earnestly longed, and why should we grieve that they have obtained it? — Now they have got to their Father's house. They find more comfort a thousand times now [that] they are gone home, than they did in their journey. In this world they underwent much labor and toil: it was a wilderness they passed through. There were many difficulties in the way: mountains and rough places. It was laborious and fatiguing to travel the road, and they had many wearisome days and nights: but now they have got to their everlasting rest. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13) They look back upon the difficulties, and sorrows, and dangers of life, rejoicing that they have surmounted them all.

We are ready to look upon death as their calamity, and to mourn that those who were so dear to us should be in the dark grave: that they are there transformed to corruption and worms, taken away from their dear children and enjoyments, etc. as though they were in awful circumstances. But this is owing to our infirmity. They are in a happy condition, inconceivably blessed. They do not mourn, but rejoice with exceeding joy: their mouths are filled with joyful songs, and they drink at rivers of pleasure. They find no mixture of grief that they have changed their earthly enjoyments, and the company of mortals, for heaven. Their life here, though in the best circumstances, was attended with much that was adverse and afflictive, but now there is an end to all adversity. "They shall hunger no more nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Rev. 7:16, 17)

It is true, we shall see them no more in this world, yet we ought to consider that we are traveling towards the same place; and why should we break our hearts that they have got there before us? We are following after them, and hope as soon as we get to our journey's end, to be with them again, in better circumstances. A degree of mourning for near relations when departed is not inconsistent with Christianity, but very agreeable to it. For as long as we are flesh and blood, we have animal propensities and affections. But we have just reason that our mourning should be mingled with joy. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others that have no hope." (1 Thes. 4:13) *i.e.* that they should not sorrow as the heathen, who had no knowledge of a future happiness. This appears by the following verse; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."

2. If our lives ought to be only a journey towards heaven, how ill do they improve their lives, that spend them in traveling towards hell? — Some men spend their whole lives, from their infancy to their dying day, in going down the broad way to destruction. They not only draw nearer to hell as to time, but they every day grow more ripe for destruction. They are more assimilated to the inhabitants of the internal world. While others press forward in the straight and narrow way to life and laboriously travel up the hill toward Zion, against the inclinations and tendency of the flesh, these run with a swift career down to eternal death. This is the employment of every day, with all wicked men, and the whole day is spent in it. As soon as ever they awake in the morning, they set out anew in the way to hell and spend every waking moment in it. They begin in early days. "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." (Psa. 58:3) They hold on it with perseverance. Many of them who live to be old, are never weary in it. Though they live to be an hundred years old, they will not cease traveling in the way to hell till they arrive there. And all the concerns of life are subordinated to this employment. A wicked man is a servant of sin, [and] his powers and

faculties are employed in the service of sin and in fitness for hell. And all his possessions are so used by him as to be subservient to the same purpose. Men spend their time in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Thus do all unclean persons, who live in lascivious practices in secret: all malicious persons, all profane persons that neglect the duties of religion. Thus do all unjust persons, and those who are fraudulent and oppressive in their dealings. Thus do all backbiters and revilers, [and] all covetous persons that set their hearts chiefly on the riches of this world. Thus do tavern-haunters, and frequenters of evil company, and many other kinds that might be mentioned. Thus the bulk of mankind are hastening onward in the broad way to destruction, which is, as it were, filled up with the multitude that are going in it with one accord. And they are every day going to hell out of this broad way by thousands. Multitudes are continually flowing down into the great lake of fire and brimstone, as some mighty river constantly disembogues its water into the ocean.

3. Hence when persons are converted they do but begin their work and set out in the way they have to go. — They never till then do anything at that work in which their whole lives ought to be spent. Persons before conversion never take a step that way. Then does a man first set out on his journey, when he is brought home to Christ, and so far is he from having done his work, that his care and labor in his Christian work and business, is then but begun, in which he must spend the remaining part of his life.

Those persons do ill, who when they are converted and have obtained a hope of their being in a good condition, do not strive as earnestly as they did before, while they were under awakenings. They ought, henceforward, as long as they live, to be as earnest and laborious, as watchful and careful as ever: yea, they should increase more and more. It is no just excuse that now they have obtained conversion. Should not we be as diligent as that we ourselves may be that we may serve and glorify God, happy? And if we have obtained grace, yet we ought to strive as much that we may obtain the other degrees that are before, as we did to obtain that small degree that is behind. The apostle tells us that he forgot what was behind and reached forth towards what was before. (Phil. 3:13)

Yea, those who are converted have now a further reason to strive for grace. For they have seen something of its excellency. A man who has once tasted the blessings of Canaan, has more reason to press towards it than he had before. And they who are converted, should strive to “make their calling and election sure.” All those who are converted are not sure of it, and those who are sure, do not know that they shall be always so, and still, seeking and serving God with the utmost diligence, is the way to have assurance and to have it maintained.

SECTION IV

An exhortation so to spend the present life, that it may only be a journey towards heaven

Labor to obtain such a disposition of mind that you may choose heaven for your inheritance and home, and may earnestly long for it and be willing to change this world, and all its enjoyments, for heaven. Labor to have your heart taken up so much about heaven, and heavenly enjoyments, as that you may rejoice when God calls you to leave your best earthly friends and comforts for heaven, there to enjoy God and Christ.

Be persuaded to travel in the way that leads to heaven: *viz.* in holiness, self-denial, mortification, obedience to all the commands of God, following Christ’s example [and] in a way of a heavenly life, or imitation of the saints and angels in heaven. Let it be your daily work, from morning till night, and hold out in it to the end. Let nothing stop or discourage you, or turn you aside from this road. And let all other concerns be subordinated to this. Consider the reasons that have been mentioned why you should thus spend your life: that this world is not your abiding place, that the future world is to be your everlasting abode, and that the enjoyments and concerns of this world are given entirely in order to another. And consider further for motive.

1. How worthy is heaven that your life should be wholly spent as a journey towards it. — To what better purpose can you spend your life, whether you respect your duty or your interest? What better end can you propose to your journey, than to obtain heaven? You are placed in this world with a choice given you, that you may travel which way you please, and one way leads to heaven. Now, can you direct your course better than this way? All men have some aim or other in living. Some mainly seek worldly things. They spend their days in such pursuits. But is not heaven, where is fullness of joy forever, much more worthy to be sought by you? How can you better employ your strength, use your means, and spend your days, than in traveling the road that leads to the everlasting enjoyment of God: to his glorious presence, to the new Jerusalem, to the heavenly mount Zion, where all your desires will be filled and no danger of ever losing your happiness? — No man is at home in this world, whether he choose heaven or not: here he is but a transient person. Where can you choose your home better than in heaven?

2. This is the way to have death comfortable to us. — To spend our lives so as to be only a journeying towards heaven, is the way to be free from bondage and to have the prospect and forethought of death comfortable. Does the traveler think of his journey's end with fear and terror? Is terrible to him to think that he has almost got to his journey's end? Were the children of Israel sorry after forty years' travel in the wilderness, when they had almost got to Canaan? This is the way to be able to part with the world without grief. Does it grieve the traveler when he has got home, to quit his staff and load of provisions that he had to sustain him by the way?

3. No more of your life will be pleasant to think of when you come to die, than has been spent after this manner. — If you have spent none of your life this way, your whole life will be terrible to you to think of, unless you die under some great delusion. You will see then, that all of your life that has been spent otherwise, is lost. You will then see the vanity of all other aims that you may have proposed to yourself. The thought of what you here possessed and enjoyed will not be pleasant to you, unless you can think also that you have subordinated them to this purpose.

4. Consider that those who are willing thus to spend their lives as a journey towards heaven may have heaven. — Heaven, however high and glorious, is attainable to such poor worthless creatures as we are. We may attain that glorious region which is the habitation of angels: yea, the dwelling-place of the Son of God, and where is the glorious presence of the great Jehovah. And we may have it freely, without money and without price. If we are but willing to travel the road that leads to it and bend our course that way as long as we live, we may and shall have heaven for our eternal resting place.

5. Let it be considered that if our lives be not a journey towards heaven, they will be a journey to hell. All mankind, after they have been here a short while, go to either of the two great receptacles of all that depart out of this world: the one in *heaven*; whither the bulk of mankind throng. And one or the other of these must be the issue of our course in this world.

I shall conclude by giving a few *directions*:

1. Labor to get a sense of the vanity of this world, on account of the little satisfaction that is to be enjoyed here, its short continuance, and unserviceableness when we most stand in need of help, *viz.* on a death-bed. — All men, that live any considerable time in the world, might see enough to convince them of its vanity, if they would but consider. — Be persuaded therefore to exercise consideration when you see and hear, from time to time, of the death of others. Labor to turn your thoughts this way. See the vanity of the world in such a glass.

2. Labor to be much acquainted with heaven. — If you are not acquainted with it, you will not be likely to spend your life as a journey thither. You will not be sensible of its worth, nor will you long for it. Unless you are much conversant in your mind with a better good, it will be exceeding difficult to you to have your hearts loose from these things, to use them only in subordination to something else, and be ready to part with them for the sake of that better good. — Labor therefore to obtain a realizing sense of a heavenly world, to get a firm belief of its reality, and to be very much conversant with it in your thoughts.

3. Seek heaven only by Jesus Christ. — Christ tells us that he is the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14:6) He tells us that he is the door of the sheep. “I am the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved; and go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:9) If we therefore would improve our lives as a journey towards heaven, we must seek it by him and not by our own righteousness, as expecting to obtain it only for his sake: looking to him [and] having our dependence on him, who has procured it for us by his merit. And expect [that] strength to walk in holiness, the way that leads to heaven, only from him.

4. Let Christians help one another in going this journey. — There are many ways whereby Christians might greatly forward one another in their way to heaven, as by religious conference, etc. Therefore let them be exhorted to go this journey as it were in company: conversing together, and assisting one another. Company is very desirable in a journey, but in none so much as this. — Let them go united and not fall out by the way, which would be to hinder one another, but use all means they can to help each other up the hill. — This would ensure a more successful traveling and a more joyful meeting at their Father’s house in glory.

Columbanus

Sermon IV

1

All training, [according to the Apostle,] for the present seems to be a matter not of joy but of sorrow; nevertheless afterwards it yields a pleasant fruit and peaceful increase of reward to those who are exercised by it. Heb. 12.11

For indeed what is learnt here without sorrow and toil, in the time of our very greatest stupidity and weakness? But if temporal sorts of training destroy the sweetness of present joy, what is to be hoped for from this training of our school? This is in fact the training of all trainings, and at the price of present sorrow it prepares the pleasure of unending time and the delight of unending joy. For what sort of training is there that is without the sorrow of chastisement? How much grief or sorrow lies in the craftsmen's trades? How much toil? How much labour awaits those that ply a craft or even build? With how many blows, with what pains are musicians' pupils taught? With how many fatigues or sorrows are doctors students troubled? And with what anxieties are the lovers of wisdom straitened, with what pressure of poverty the philosophers? Finally, with how many dangers are offices of government sought out? And in all these, though it be after the toils of countless miseries, a most peaceful conclusion is patiently awaited, and in consideration of this the aforesaid tribulations, though not without sorrow, though with much bitterness, are borne. And indeed if training is our companion in sorrow, yet its conclusion is reached in joy and the toil depends upon security, and in a strange manner sadness is very patiently borne for joy, bitterness for pleasure, toil for security, and anxiety for rest. For though they do not know if they will reach the conclusion of any training, yet even for an unsure hope of future happiness they endure present sorrow not disdainfully, and not backwardly do they prosecute hard toil. For which of them is sure whether he will ever even be a master of that training whose toil he endures? Or whether he will survive to share the happiness for which he bears sorrow?

2

But if, then, such and so many pains are borne untiringly for temporal and unsure rewards, what ought we to endure for eternal, true and sure ones, whose conclusion is eternal? And indeed, if amongst the disciples of temporal trainings it is uncertain how long they will be allowed to enjoy the training once acquired, yet they are distracted by no sloth in its pursuit, and thus, though in double doubt, they are more persistent than ourselves, for as I have said, they do not know whether they will reach the conclusion of their training, considering the uncertainty of life and the intractability of innate powers, and all the same, once they have acquired the training, they doubt afresh how long they may employ it. For they are as certain of quitting their training shortly as they are uncertain of perfecting it. Thus, as we have said, they bear temporal pursuits and imperfect aptitudes, sorrows and griefs, anxieties and toils, dangers and journeyings, injuries and fatigues, while indeed they admit the uncertainty and frailty of the things for which such tribulations are endured; if the training of our school involves trials, if it involves burdens, sorrows, bitternesses, will it be wondered at, will it be thought a thing to shun? Is it not impossible for any polished accomplishment or exercise to be attained without training? Or can training be acquired without bitterness? Therefore, since these things are so, *let us make ready our mind, [not for joy, not for security, as the Sage says, but] for temptations* (Ecclus. 2.1) and trials, for griefs and toils. Christ was tried, injured, reviled, suffered; and do you think of security on earth? See and understand how difficult it is for this age to be conquered, since a saint is freed from it not otherwise than by the death of Christ. *If the just shall scarcely thus be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly man appear?* (1 Pet. 4.18)

Listen to the Lord saying to His disciples, *In the world you shall have tribulation*, (Ioann. 16.33) and again, *Yet you shall weep and wail, but the world shall rejoice and you shall be sad* (ib. 20).

3

Observe the sorrow of our training, understand that we do not pass from joy to joy nor from security to security, but from grief to joy and from trial to security. Thus we must patiently bear brief sorrow, that we may obtain eternal joy; and *the light measure of our trial must be endured with readiness, that we may attain the eternal life of great glory*. (2 Cor. 4.17)

For if in pursuit of transitory things these vexations, as we have very often said, occur without prevailing, what shall weary or prevail over us who are merchants of heavenly kingdoms? We should yield to no joys or sorrows, no blandishment or bitterness; for the world is full of both, and both have been conquered by the Captain of our war. And let us see how perilously the unclean yields to those things to which the clean and undefiled has not yielded; with Christ let us disdain the world's honours and *the kingdoms of the devil with all their glory*. (cf. Matt. 4.8)

Let us scorn to receive whatever is of the devil, and to that king of brief rejoicing let us say, *May your possessions go with you to perdition*. (Act. 8.20) Let us be *sad even unto death* (cf. Matt. 26.38) with Christ, *that our sorrow may be turned into joy*. (cf. Ioann. 16.20) Let the world laugh with the devil, far from us be their rejoicing; if we wish to joy now, let us joy partly in hope, since hereafter we shall have true joy in reality, sorrowing for our sins, rejoicing for the hope of eternal life, sorrowing for Christ's absence, triumphing likewise, because we read, *We shall see Him as He is*. (1 Ioann. 3.2)

For though we are filled with the sorrows of our present woes, though we are saddened by the repetition of our sins, yet victory over both is free rejoicing and a sterling joy; and though for a time *we are on pilgrimage from the Lord*, (2 Cor. 5.6) that as reward for a brief period's warfare we should be crowned for ever, we ought not to be over-sad, knowing that we shall soon go to Him, and with Him ever dwell. For He created us to this end, that ever reigning with Him, we should praise Him unto ages of ages, and continually give thanks to Him. Therefore, knowing these things, under no toils, no trials let us fail, by no sorrows let us be conquered, by no wars fatigued, let us be moved from our place by no agonies of training, again let us be distracted by no blandishments, beguiled by no charms, and let us say as with the Apostle's voice, *May no one and nothing separate us from the love of Christ, [no] trial, [no] difficulty, [no] persecution, [no] hunger, [no] nakedness, [no] danger, [no] death by sword*, (sq. Rom. 8.35-39) fire, cross, or murder, nothing sad, nothing sweet, nothing hard, nothing fair, may none of the world's vanities separate us from Christ, that we may abide in Him here and for eternal ages of ages.

Amen.

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Clement of Rome

1 Clement

CHAPTER 1 -- SALUTATION, AND PRAISE FOR THE CORINTHIANS BEFORE SCHISM BROKE FORTH AMONG THEM.

The Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to those who are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

Owing, dear brethren, to the sudden and successive calamitous events which have happened to ourselves, we feel that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the points respecting which you consulted us; and especially to that shameful and detestable sedition, utterly abhorrent to the elect of God, which a few rash and self-confident persons have kindled to such a pitch of frenzy, that your venerable and illustrious name, worthy to be universally loved, has suffered grievous injury. For who ever dwelt even for a short time among you, and did not find your faith to be as fruitful of virtue as it was firmly established? Who did not admire the sobriety and moderation of your godliness in Christ? Who did not proclaim the magnificence of your habitual hospitality? And who did not rejoice over your perfect and well-grounded knowledge? For you did all things without respect of persons, and walked in the commandments of God, being obedient to those who had the rule over you, and giving all fitting honour to the presbyters among you. You enjoined young men to be of a sober and serious mind; you instructed your wives to do all things with a blameless, becoming, and pure conscience, loving their husbands as in duty bound; and you taught them that, living in the rule of obedience, they should manage their household affairs becomingly, and be in every respect marked by discretion.

CHAPTER 2 -- PRAISE OF THE CORINTHIANS CONTINUED.

Moreover, you were all distinguished by humility, and were in no respect puffed up with pride, but yielded obedience rather than extorted it, and were more willing to give than to receive? Content with the provision which God had made for you, and carefully attending to His words, you were inwardly filled with His doctrine, and His sufferings were before your eyes. Thus a profound and abundant peace was given to you all, and you had an insatiable desire for doing good, while a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit was upon you all. Full of holy designs, and with true earnestness of mind and a godly confidence, you stretched forth your hands to God Almighty, beseeching Him to be merciful to you, if you had been guilty of any involuntary transgression. Day and night you were anxious for the whole brotherhood, that the number of God's elect might be saved with mercy and a good conscience. You were sincere and uncorrupted, and forgetful of injuries between one another. Every kind of faction and schism was abominable in your sight. You mourned over the transgressions of your neighbours: their deficiencies you deemed your own. You never grudged any act of kindness, being "ready to every good work." Adorned by a thoroughly virtuous and religious life, you did all things in the fear of God. The commandments and ordinances of the Lord were written upon the tablets of your hearts.

CHAPTER 3 -- THE SAD STATE OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH AFTER SEDITION AROSE IN IT FROM ENVY AND EMULATION.

Every kind of honour and happiness was bestowed upon you, and then was fulfilled that which is written, "My beloved ate and drink, and was enlarged and became fat, and kicked." Hence flowed emulation and envy, strife and sedition, persecution and disorder, war and captivity. So the worthless rose up against the honoured, those

of no reputation against such as were renowned, the foolish against the wise, the young against those advanced in years. For this reason righteousness and peace are now far departed from you, inasmuch as every one abandons the fear of God, and is become blind in His faith, neither walks in the ordinances of His appointment, nor acts a part becoming a Christian, but walks after his own wicked lusts, resuming the practice of an unrighteous and ungodly envy, by which death itself entered into the world.

CHAPTER 4 -- MANY EVILS HAVE ALREADY FLOWED FROM THIS SOURCE IN ANCIENT TIMES.

For thus it is written: "And it came to pass after certain days, that Cain brought of the fruits of the earth a sacrifice to God; and Abel also brought of the firstlings of his sheep, and of the fat thereof. And God had respect to Abel and to his offerings, but Cain and his sacrifices He did not regard. And Cain was deeply grieved, and his countenance fell. And God said to Cain, Why are you grieved, and why is your countenance fallen? If you offer rightly, but do not divide rightly, have you not sinned? Be at peace: your offering returns to yourself, and you shall again possess it. And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go into the field. And it came to pass, while they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and killed him." You see, brethren, how envy and jealousy led to the murder of a brother. Through envy, also, our father Jacob fled from the face of Esau his brother. Envy made Joseph be persecuted unto death, and to come into bondage. Envy compelled Moses to flee from the face of Pharaoh king of Egypt, when he heard these words from his fellow countryman, "Who made you a judge or a ruler over us? Will you kill me, as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" On account of envy, Aaron and Miriam had to make their home outside of the camp. Envy brought down Dathan and Abiram alive to Hades, through the sedition which they excited against God's servant Moses. Through envy, David underwent the hatred not only of foreigners, but was also persecuted by Saul king of Israel.

CHAPTER 5 -- NO LESS EVILS HAVE ARISEN FROM THE SAME SOURCE IN THE MOST RECENT TIMES. THE MARTYRDOM OF PETER AND PAUL.

But not to dwell upon ancient examples, let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes. Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy, the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the Church] have been persecuted and put to death. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours, and when he had finally suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience.

CHAPTER 6 -- CONTINUATION. SEVERAL OTHER MARTYRS.

To these men who spent their lives in the practice of holiness, there is to be added a great multitude of the elect, who, having through envy endured many indignities and tortures, furnished us with a most excellent example. Through envy, those women, the Danaids and Dircae, being persecuted, after they had suffered terrible and unspeakable torments, finished the course of their faith with steadfastness, and though weak in body, received a noble reward. Envy has alienated wives from their husbands, and changed that saying of our father Adam, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Envy and strife have overthrown great cities and rooted up mighty nations.

CHAPTER 7 -- AN EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE.

These things, beloved, we write to you, not merely to admonish you of your duty, but also to remind ourselves. For we are struggling in the same arena, and the same conflict is assigned to both of us. So let us give up vain and fruitless cares, and approach to the glorious and venerable rule of our holy calling. Let us attend to what is good, pleasing, and acceptable in the sight of Him who formed us. Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is to God, which, having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance before the whole world. Let us turn to every age that has passed, and learn that, from generation to generation, the Lord has granted a place of repentance to all who would be converted to Him. Noah preached repentance, and as many as listened to him were saved. Jonah proclaimed destruction to the Ninevites; but they, repenting of their sins, propitiated God by prayer, and obtained salvation, although they were aliens [to the covenant] of God.

CHAPTER 8 -- CONTINUATION RESPECTING REPENTANCE.

The ministers of the grace of God have, by the Holy Spirit, spoken of repentance; and the Lord of all things has himself declared with an oath regarding it, "As I live, says the Lord, I desire not the death of the sinner, but rather his repentance;" adding, moreover, this gracious declaration: "Repent O house of Israel, of your iniquity. Say to the children of My people, Though your sins reach from earth to heaven, and though they be redder than scarlet, and blacker than sackcloth, if you turn to Me with your whole heart, and say, Father! I will listen to you, as to a holy people." And in another place He says: "Wash, and become clean; put away the wickedness of your souls from before my eyes; cease from your evil ways, and learn to do well; seek out judgment, deliver the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and see that justice is done to the widow; and come, and let us reason together. He declares, "Though your sins be like crimson, I will make them white as snow; though they be like scarlet, I will whiten them like wool. And if you are willing and obey Me, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse, and will not listen to Me, the sword shall devour you, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things." Desiring, therefore, that all His beloved should be partakers of repentance, He has, by His almighty will, established [these declarations].

CHAPTER 9 -- EXAMPLES OF THE SAINTS.

So let us yield obedience to His excellent and glorious will; and imploring His mercy and loving-kindness, while we forsake all fruitless labours, and strife, and envy, which leads to death, let us turn and have recourse to His compassions. Let us steadfastly contemplate those who have perfectly ministered to His excellent glory. Let us take (for instance) Enoch, who, being found righteous in obedience, was translated, and death was never known to happen to him? Noah, being found faithful, preached regeneration to the world through his ministry; and the Lord saved by him the animals which, with one accord, entered into the ark.

CHAPTER 10 -- CONTINUATION OF THE ABOVE.

Abraham, called "the friend," was found faithful, inasmuch as he obeyed the words of God. He, in the exercise of obedience, went out from his own country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, in order that, by forsaking a small territory, and a weak family, and an insignificant house, he might inherit the promises of God. For God said to him, "Leave your country, and your kindred, and your father's house, and go into the land which I shall show you. And I will make you a great nation, and will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be blessed. And I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you; and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And again, on his departing from Lot, God said to him. "Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you now are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth, [so that] if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered." And

again [the Scripture] says, "God brought forth Abram, and said to him, Look up now to heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them; so shall your seed be. And Abram believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." On account of his faith and hospitality, a son was given him in his old age; and in the exercise of obedience, he offered him as a sacrifice to God on one of the mountains which He showed him.

CHAPTER 11 -- CONTINUATION. LOT.

On account of his hospitality and godliness, Lot was saved out of Sodom when all the country around him was punished by means of fire and brimstone, the Lord thus making it manifest that He does not forsake those who hope in Him, but gives up those who depart from Him to punishment and torture. For Lot's wife, who went forth with him, being of a different mind from himself and not continuing in agreement with him [as to the command which had been given them], was made an example of, so as to be a pillar of salt to this day. This was done that all might know that those who are of a double mind, and who distrust the power of God, bring down judgment on themselves, and become a sign to all succeeding generations.

CHAPTER 12 -- THE REWARDS OF FAITH AND HOSPITALITY. RAHAB.

On account of her faith and hospitality, Rahab the harlot was saved. For when spies were sent by Joshua, the son of Nun, to Jericho, the king of the country ascertained that they had come to spy out their land, and sent men to seize them, in order that, when taken, they might be put to death. But the hospitable Rahab received them, and hid them on the roof of her house under some stalks of flax. And when the men sent by the king arrived and said "There came men to you who are to spy out our land; bring them forth, for so the king commands," she answered them, "The two men whom you seek came to me, but quickly departed again and are gone," thus not discovering the spies to them. Then she said to the men, "I know assuredly that the Lord your God has given you this city, for the fear and dread of you have fallen on its inhabitants. When therefore you shall have taken it, keep me and the house of my father in safety." And they said to her, "It shall be as you have spoken to us. As soon, therefore, as you know that we are at hand, you shall gather all your family under your roof, and they shall be preserved, but anyone found outside of your dwelling shall perish." Moreover, they gave her a sign to this effect, that she should hang forth from her house a scarlet thread. And thus they made it manifest that redemption should flow through the blood of the Lord to all those who believe and hope in God. You see, beloved, that there was not only faith, but prophecy, in this woman.

CHAPTER 13 -- AN EXHORTATION TO HUMILITY.

Let us therefore, brethren, be of humble mind, laying aside all haughtiness, and pride, and foolishness, and angry feelings; and let us act according to that which is written (for the Holy Spirit says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, neither let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in the Lord, in diligently seeking Him, and doing judgment and righteousness"), being especially mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus which He spoke, teaching us meekness and long-suffering. For thus He spoke: "Be merciful, that you may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven to you; as you do, so shall it be done to you; as you judge, so shall you be judged; as you are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure you measure, with the same it shall be measured to you." By this precept and by these rules let us establish ourselves, that we walk with all humility in obedience to His holy words. For the holy word says, "On whom shall I look, but on him that is meek and peaceable, and who trembles at My words?"

CHAPTER 14 -- WE SHOULD OBEY GOD RATHER THAN THE AUTHORS OF SEDITION.

It is right and holy therefore, men and brethren, to obey God rather than to follow those who, through pride and sedition, have become the leaders of a detestable emulation. For we shall incur no slight injury, but rather great danger, if we rashly yield ourselves to the inclinations of men who aim at exciting strife and tumults, so as to draw us away from what is good. Let us be kind one to another after the pattern of the tender mercy and benignity of our Creator. For it is written, "The kind-hearted shall inhabit the land, and the guiltless shall be left upon it, but transgressors shall be destroyed from off the face of it." And again [the Scripture] says, "I saw the ungodly highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Lebanon: I passed by, and, behold, he was not; and I diligently sought his place, and could not find it. Preserve innocence, and look on equity: for there shall be a remnant to the peaceful man."

CHAPTER 15 -- WE MUST ADHERE TO THOSE WHO CULTIVATE PEACE, NOT TO THOSE WHO MERELY PRETEND TO DO SO.

Let us cleave, therefore, to those who cultivate peace with godliness, and not to those who hypocritically profess to desire it. For [the Scripture] says in a certain place, "This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." And again: "They bless with their mouth, but curse with their heart." And again it says, "They loved Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue; but their heart was not right with Him, neither were they faithful in His covenant." "Let the deceitful lips become silent," [and "let the Lord destroy all the lying lips,] and the boastful tongue of those who have said, Let us magnify our tongue; our lips are our own; who is lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, and for the sighing of the needy, will I now arise, says the Lord: I will place him in safety; I will deal confidently with him."

CHAPTER 16 -- CHRIST AS AN EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY.

For Christ is of those who are humble-minded, and not of those who exalt themselves over His flock. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sceptre of the majesty of God, did not come in the pomp of pride or arrogance, although He might have done so, but in a lowly condition, as the Holy Spirit had declared regarding Him. For He says, "Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? We have declared [our message] in His presence: He is, as it were, a child, and like a root in thirsty ground; He has no form nor glory, yea, we saw Him, and He had no form nor comeliness; but His form was without eminence, yea, deficient in comparison with the [ordinary] form of men. He is a man exposed to stripes and suffering, and acquainted with the endurance of grief: for His countenance was turned away; He was despised, and not esteemed. He bears our iniquities, and is in sorrow for our sakes; yet we supposed that [on His own account] He was exposed to labour, and stripes, and affliction. But He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; [every] man has wandered in his own way; and the Lord has delivered Him up for our sins, while He in the midst of His sufferings opens not His mouth. He was brought as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before her shearer is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away; who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. For the transgressions of my people was He brought down to death. And I will give the wicked for His sepulchre, and the rich for His death, because He did no iniquity, nor was guile found in His mouth. And the Lord is pleased to purify Him by stripes. If you make an offering for sin, your soul shall see a long-lived seed. And the Lord is pleased to relieve Him of the affliction of His soul, to show Him light, and to form Him with understanding, to justify the Just One who ministers well to many; and He Himself shall carry their sins. On this account He shall inherit many, and shall divide the spoil of the strong; because His soul was delivered to death, and He was reckoned among the transgressors, and He bare the sins of many, and for their sins was He delivered." And again He says, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All who see Me have derided Me; they have spoken with their lips; they have wagged their head, [saying] He hoped in God, let Him deliver Him, let Him

save Him, since He delights in Him." You see, beloved, what is the example which has been given us; for if the Lord thus humbled Himself, what shall we do who have through Him come under the yoke of His grace?

CHAPTER 17 -- THE SAINTS AS EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY.

Let us be imitators also of those who in goat-skins and sheep-skins went about proclaiming the coming of Christ; I mean Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel among the prophets, with those others to whom a like testimony is borne [in Scripture]. Abraham was specially honoured, and was called the friend of God; yet he, earnestly regarding the glory of God, humbly declared, "I am but dust and ashes." Moreover, it is thus written of Job, "Job was a righteous man, and blameless, truthful, God-fearing, and one that kept himself from all evil." But bringing an accusation against himself, he said, "No man is free from defilement, even if his life be but of one day." Moses was called faithful in all God's house; and through his instrumentality, God punished Egypt with plagues and tortures. Yet he, though thus greatly honoured, did not adopt lofty language, but said, when the divine oracle came to him out of the bush, "Who am I, that You send me? I am a man of a feeble voice and a slow tongue." And again he said, "I am but as the smoke of a pot."

CHAPTER 18 -- DAVID AS AN EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY.

But what shall we say concerning David, to whom such testimony was borne, and of whom God said, "I have found a man after My own heart, David the son of Jesse; and in everlasting mercy have I anointed him?" Yet this very man says to God, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Your great mercy; and according to the multitude of Your compassions, blot out my transgression. Wash me still more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. Against You only have I sinned, and done that which was evil in Your sight; that You may be justified in Your sayings, and may overcome when You are judged. For, behold, I was conceived in transgressions, and in my sins did my mother conceive me. For, behold, You have loved truth; the secret and hidden things of wisdom have You shown me. you shall sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; you shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. you shall make me to hear joy and gladness; my bones, which have been humbled, shall exult. Turn away Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and establish me by Your governing Spirit. I will teach transgressors Your ways, and the ungodly shall be converted to You. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation: my tongue shall exult in Your righteousness. O Lord, you shall open my mouth, and my lips shall show forth Your praise. For if You had desired sacrifice, I would have given it; You will not delight in burnt-offerings. The sacrifice [acceptable] to God is a bruised spirit; a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise."

CHAPTER 19 -- IMITATING THESE EXAMPLES, LET US SEEK AFTER PEACE.

Thus the humility and godly submission of so great and illustrious men have rendered not only us, but also all the generations before us, better; even as many as have received His oracles in fear and truth. So, having so many great and glorious examples set before us, let us turn again to the practice of that peace which from the beginning was the mark set before us; and let us look steadfastly to the Father and Creator of the universe, and cleave to His mighty and surpassingly great gifts and benefactions, of peace. Let us contemplate Him with our understanding, and look with the eyes of our soul to His long-suffering will. Let us reflect how free from wrath He is towards all His creation.

CHAPTER 20 -- THE PEACE AND HARMONY OF THE UNIVERSE.

The heavens, revolving under His government, are subject to Him in peace. Day and night run the course appointed by Him, in no way hindering each other. The sun and moon, with the companies of the stars, roll on in harmony according to His command, within their prescribed limits, and without any deviation. The fruitful earth, according to His will, brings forth food in abundance, at the proper seasons, for man and beast and all the living beings upon it, never hesitating, nor changing any of the ordinances which He has fixed. The unsearchable places of abysses, and the indescribable arrangements of the lower world, are restrained by the same laws. The vast unmeasurable sea, gathered together by His working into various basins, never passes beyond the bounds placed around it, but does as He has commanded. For He said, "Thus far shall you come, and your waves shall be broken within you." The ocean, impassible to man, and the worlds beyond it, are regulated by the same enactments of the Lord. The seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, peacefully give place to one another. The winds in their several quarters fulfill, at the proper time, their service without hindrance. The ever-flowing fountains, formed both for enjoyment and health, furnish without fail their breasts for the life of men. The very smallest of living beings meet together in peace and concord. All these the great Creator and Lord of all has appointed to exist in peace and harmony; while He does good to all, but most abundantly to us who have fled for refuge to His compassions through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory and majesty for ever and ever. Amen. xxxxx

CHAPTER 21 -- LET US OBEY GOD, AND NOT THE AUTHORS OF SEDITION.

Take heed, beloved, lest His many kindnesses lead to the condemnation of us all. [For thus it must be] unless we walk worthy of Him, and with one mind do those things which are good and well-pleasing in His sight. For [the Scripture] says in a certain place, "The Spirit of the Lord is a candle searching the secret parts of the belly." Let us reflect how near He is, and that none of the thoughts or reasonings in which we engage are hid from Him. It is right, therefore, that we should not leave the post which His will has assigned us. Let us rather offend those men who are foolish, and inconsiderate, and lifted up, and who glory in the pride of their speech, than [offend] God. Let us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us; let us esteem those who have the rule over us; let us honour the aged among us; let us train up the young men in the fear of God; let us direct our wives to that which is good. Let them exhibit the lovely habit of purity [in all their conduct]; let them show forth the sincere disposition of meekness; let them make manifest the command which they have of their tongue, by their manner of speaking; let them display their love, not by preferring one to another, but by showing equal affection to all that piously fear God. Let your children be partakers of true Christian training; let them learn of how great avail humility is with God -- how much the spirit of pure affection can prevail with Him -- how excellent and great His fear is, and how it saves all those who walk in it with a pure mind. For He is a Searcher of the thoughts and desires [of the heart]: His breath is in us; and when He pleases, He will take it away.

CHAPTER 22 -- THESE EXHORTATIONS ARE CONFIRMED BY THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, WHICH PROCLAIMS THE MISERY OF SINFUL CONDUCT.

Now the faith which is in Christ confirms all these [admonitions]. For He Himself by the Holy Ghost thus addresses us: "Come, you children, listen to Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desires life, and loves to see good days? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are [open] to their prayers. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles." "Many are the stripes [appointed for] the wicked; but mercy shall compass those about who hope in the Lord."

CHAPTER 23 -- BE HUMBLE, AND BELIEVE THAT CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

The all-merciful and beneficent Father has bowels [of compassion] towards those who fear Him, and kindly and lovingly bestows His favours upon those who come to Him with a simple mind. So let us not be double-minded; neither let our soul be lifted up on account of His exceedingly great and glorious gifts. Far from us be that which is written, "Wretched are they who are of a double mind, and of a doubting heart; who say, These things we have heard even in the times of our fathers; but, behold, we have grown old, and none of them has happened to us.." You foolish ones! compare yourselves to a tree: take [for instance] the vine. First of all, it sheds its leaves, then it buds, next it puts forth leaves, and then it flowers; after that comes the sour grape, and then follows the ripened fruit. You perceive how in a little time the fruit of a tree comes to maturity. Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, "Speedily will He come, and will not tarry;" and, "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom you look."

CHAPTER 24 -- GOD CONTINUALLY SHOWS US IN NATURE THAT THERE WILL BE A RESURRECTION.

Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually proves to us that there shall be a future resurrection, of which He has rendered the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits by raising Him from the dead. Let us contemplate, beloved, the resurrection which is at all times taking place. Day and night declare to us a resurrection. The night sinks to sleep, and the day arises; the day [again] departs, and the night comes on. Let us behold the fruits [of the earth], how the sowing of grain takes place. The sower goes forth, and casts it into the ground; and the seed being thus scattered, though dry and naked when it fell upon the earth, is gradually dissolved. Then out of its dissolution the mighty power of the providence of the Lord raises it up again, and from one seed many arise and bring forth fruit.

CHAPTER 25 -- THE PHOENIX AN EMBLEM OF OUR RESURRECTION.

Let us consider that wonderful sign [of the resurrection] which takes place in Eastern lands, that is, in Arabia and the countries round about. There is a certain bird which is called a phoenix. This is the only one of its kind, and lives five hundred years. And when the time of its dissolution draws near that it must die, it builds itself a nest of frankincense, and myrrh, and other spices, into which, when the time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But as the flesh decays a certain kind of worm is produced, which, being nourished by the juices of the dead bird, brings forth feathers. Then, when it has acquired strength, it takes up that nest in which are the bones of its parent, and bearing these it passes from the land of Arabia into Egypt, to the city called Heliopolis. And, in open day, flying in the sight of all men, it places them on the altar of the sun, and having done this, hastens back to its former abode. The priests then inspect the registers of the dates, and find that it has returned exactly as the five hundredth year was completed.

CHAPTER 26 -- WE SHALL RISE AGAIN, THEN, AS THE SCRIPTURE ALSO TESTIFIES.

Do we then deem it any great and wonderful thing for the Maker of all things to raise up again those who have piously served Him in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird He shows us the mightiness of His power to fulfil His promise? For [the Scripture] says in a certain place, "You shall raise me up, and I shall confess to You;" and again, "I laid down, and slept; I awaked, because You are with me;" and again, Job says, "you shall raise up this flesh of mine, which has suffered all these things."

CHAPTER 27 -- IN THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION, LET US CLEAVE TO THE OMNIPOTENT AND OMNISCIENT GOD.

Having then this hope, let our souls be bound to Him who is faithful in His promises, and just in His judgments. He who has commanded us not to lie, shall much more Himself not lie; for nothing is impossible with God, except to lie. Let His faith therefore be stirred up again within us, and let us consider that all things are nigh unto Him. By the word of His might He established all things, and by His word He can overthrow them. "Who shall say to Him, What have you done? or, Who shall resist the power of His strength?" When and as He pleases He will do all things, and none of the things determined by Him shall pass away? All things are open before Him, and nothing can be hidden from His counsel. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handy-work. Day to day utters speech, and night to night shows knowledge. And there are no words or speeches of which the voices are not heard."

CHAPTER 28 -- GOD SEES ALL THINGS: THEREFORE LET US AVOID TRANSGRESSION.

Since then all things are seen and heard [by God], let us fear Him, and forsake those wicked works which proceed from evil desires; so that, through His mercy, we may be protected from the judgments to come. For whither can any of us flee from His mighty hand? Or what world will receive any of those who run away from Him? For the Scripture says in a certain place, "Whither shall I go, and where shall I be hid from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I go away even to the uttermost parts of the earth, there is Your right hand; if I make my bed in the abyss, there is Your Spirit." Whither, then, shall any one go, or where shall he escape from Him who comprehends all things?

CHAPTER 29 -- LET US ALSO DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PURITY OF HEART.

Let us then draw near to Him with holiness of spirit, lifting up pure and undefiled hands to Him, loving our gracious and merciful Father, who has made us partakers in the blessings of His elect. For thus it is written, "When the Most High divided the nations, when He scattered the sons of Adam, He fixed the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God. His people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, and Israel the lot of His inheritance." And in another place [the Scripture] says, "Behold, the Lord takes to Himself a nation out of the midst of the nations, as a man takes the first-fruits of his threshing-floor; and from that nation shall come forth the Most Holy.

CHAPTER 30 -- LET US DO THOSE THINGS THAT PLEASE GOD, AND FLEE FROM THOSE HE HATES, THAT WE MAY BE BLESSED.

Seeing, therefore, that we are the portion of the Holy One, let us do all those things which pertain to holiness, avoiding all evil-speaking, all abominable and impure embraces, together with all drunkenness, seeking after change, all abominable lusts, detestable adultery, and execrable pride. "For God," says [the Scripture], "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Let us cleave, then, to those to whom grace has been given by God. Let us clothe ourselves with concord and humility, ever exercising self-control, standing far off from all whispering and evil-speaking, being justified by our works, and not our words. For [the Scripture] says, "He that speaks much, shall also hear much in answer. And does he that is ready in speech deem himself righteous? Blessed is he that is born of woman, who lives but a short time: be not given to much speaking." Let our praise be in God, and not of ourselves; for God hates those who commend themselves. Let testimony to our good deeds be borne by others, as it was in the case of our righteous forefathers. Boldness, and arrogance, and audacity belong to those that are accursed of God; but moderation, humility, and meekness to such as are blessed by Him.

CHAPTER 31 -- LET US SEE BY WHAT MEANS WE MAY OBTAIN THE DIVINE BLESSING.

Let us cleave then to His blessing, and consider what are the means of possessing it. Let us think over the things which have taken place from the beginning. For what reason was our father Abraham blessed? was it not because he wrought righteousness and truth through faith? Isaac, with perfect confidence, as if knowing what was to happen, cheerfully yielded himself as a sacrifice. Jacob, through reason of his brother, went forth with humility from his own land, and came to Laban and served him; and there was given to him the sceptre of the twelve tribes of Israel.

CHAPTER 32 -- WE ARE JUSTIFIED NOT BY OUR OWN WORKS, BUT BY FAITH.

Whosoever will candidly consider each particular, will recognise the greatness of the gifts which were given by him. For from him have sprung the priests and all the Levites who minister at the altar of God. From him also [was descended] our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. From him [arose] kings, princes, and rulers of the race of Judah. Nor are his other tribes in small glory, inasmuch as God had promised, "Your seed shall be as the stars of heaven." All these, therefore, were highly honoured, and made great, not for their own sake, or for their own works, or for the righteousness which they wrought, but through the operation of His will. And we, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 33 -- BUT LET US NOT OWE UP THE PRACTICE OF GOOD WORKS AND LOVE. GOD HIMSELF IS AN EXAMPLE TO US OF GOOD WORKS.

What shall we do, then, brethren? Shall we become slothful in well-doing, and cease from the practice of love? God forbid that any such course should be followed by us! But rather let us hasten with all energy and readiness of mind to perform every good work. For the Creator and Lord of all Himself rejoices in His works. For by His infinitely great power He established the heavens, and by His incomprehensible wisdom He adorned them. He also divided the earth from the water which surrounds it, and fixed it upon the immoveable foundation of His own will. The animals also which are upon it He commanded by His own word into existence. So likewise, when He had formed the sea, and the living creatures which are in it, He enclosed them [within their proper bounds] by His own power. Above all, with His holy and undefiled hands He formed man, the most excellent [of His creatures], and truly great through the understanding given him -- the express likeness of His own image. For thus says God: "Let us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness. So God made man; male and female He created them." Having thus finished all these things, He approved them, and blessed them, and said, "Increase and multiply." We see, then, how all righteous men have been adorned with good works, and how the Lord Himself, adorning Himself with His works, rejoiced. Having therefore such an example, let us without delay accede to His will, and let us work the work of righteousness with our whole strength.

CHAPTER 34 -- GREAT IS THE REWARD OF GOOD WORKS WITH GOD. JOINED TOGETHER IN HARMONY, LET US IMPLORER THAT REWARD FROM HIM.

The good servant receives the bread of his labour with confidence; the lazy and slothful cannot look his employer in the face. It is requisite, therefore, that we be prompt in the practice of well-doing; for of Him are all things. And thus He forewarns us: "Behold, the Lord [cometh], and His reward is before His face, to render to every man according to his work." He exhorts us, therefore, with our whole heart to attend to this, that we be not lazy or slothful in any good work. Let our boasting and our confidence be in Him. Let us submit ourselves to His will. Let us consider the whole multitude of His angels, how they stand ever ready to minister to His will. For the Scripture says, "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood around Him, and thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and cried, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord of Sabaoth; the whole creation is full of His

glory." And let us therefore, conscientiously gathering together in harmony, cry to Him earnestly, as with one mouth, that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises. For [the Scripture] says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which He has prepared for those who wait for Him."

CHAPTER 35 -- IMMENSE IS THIS REWARD. HOW SHALL WE OBTAIN IT?

How blessed and wonderful, beloved, are the gifts of God! Life in immortality, splendour in righteousness, truth in perfect confidence, faith in assurance, self-control in holiness! And all these fall under the cognizance of our understandings [now]; what then shall those things be which are prepared for such as wait for Him? The Creator and Father of all worlds, the Most Holy, alone knows their amount and their beauty. Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those who wait for Him, in order that we may share in His promised gifts. But how, beloved, shall this be done? If our understanding be fixed by faith rewards God; if we earnestly seek the things which are pleasing and acceptable to Him; if we do the things which are in harmony with His blameless will; and if we follow the way of truth, casting away from us all unrighteousness and iniquity, along with all covetousness, strife, evil practices, deceit, whispering, and evil-speaking, all hatred of God, pride and haughtiness, vainglory and ambition. For they that do such things are hateful to God; and not only they that do them, but also those who take pleasure in those who do them. For the Scripture says, "But to the sinner God said, Why do you declare my statutes, and take my covenant into your mouth, seeing you hate instruction, and cast my words behind you? When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and made your portion with adulterers. Your mouth has abounded with wickedness, and your tongue contrived deceit. You sit, and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I kept silence; you thought, wicked one, that I should be like you. But I will reprove you, and set yourself before you. Consider now these things, you who forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, like a lion, and there be none to deliver. The sacrifice of praise will glorify Me, and a way is there by which I will show him the salvation of God."

CHAPTER 36 -- ALL BLESSINGS ARE GIVEN TO US THROUGH CHRIST.

This is the way, beloved, in which we find our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the High Priest of all our offerings, the defender and helper of our infirmity. By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, His immaculate and most excellent visage. By Him are the eyes of our hearts opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards His marvellous light. By Him the Lord has willed that we should taste of immortal knowledge, "who, being the brightness of His majesty, is by so much greater than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." For it is thus written, "Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." But concerning His Son the Lord spoke thus: "You are my Son, today have I begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession." And again He says to Him, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." But who are His enemies? All the wicked, and those who set themselves to oppose the will of God.

CHAPTER 37 -- CHRIST IS OUR LEADER, AND WE HIS SOLDIERS.

Let us then, men and brethren, with all energy act the part of soldiers, in accordance with His holy commandments. Let us consider those who serve under our generals, with what order, obedience, and submissiveness they perform the things which are commanded them. All are not prefects, nor commanders of a thousand, nor of a hundred, nor of fifty, nor the like, but each one in his own rank performs the things commanded by the king and the generals. The great cannot subsist without the small, nor the small without the great. There is a kind of mixture in all things, and thence arises mutual advantage. Let us take our body for an

example. The head is nothing without the feet, and the feet are nothing without the head; yea, the very smallest members of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body. But all work harmoniously together, and are under one common rule for the preservation of the whole body.

CHAPTER 38 -- LET THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH SUBMIT THEMSELVES, AND NO ONE EXALT HIMSELF ABOVE ANOTHER.

Let our whole body, then, be preserved in, Christ Jesus; and let every one be subject to his neighbour, according to the special gift bestowed upon him. Let the strong not despise the weak, and let the weak show respect to the strong. Let the rich man provide for the wants of the poor; and let the poor man bless God, because He has given him one by whom his need may be supplied. Let the wise man display his wisdom, not by [mere] words, but through good deeds. Let the humble not bear testimony to himself, but leave witness to be borne to him by another. Let him that is pure in the flesh not grow proud of it, and boast, knowing that it was another who bestowed on him the gift of continence. Let us consider, then, brethren, of what matter we were made, -- who and what manner of beings we came into the world, as it were out of a sepulchre, and from utter darkness. He who made us and fashioned us, having prepared His bountiful gifts for us before we were born, introduced us into His world. Since, therefore, we receive all these things from Him, we ought for everything to give Him thanks; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 39 -- THERE IS NO REASON FOR SELF-CONCEIT.

Foolish and inconsiderate men, who have neither wisdom nor instruction, mock and deride us, being eager to exalt themselves in their own conceits. For what can a mortal man do? or what strength is there in one made out of the dust? For it is written, "There was no shape before mine eyes, only I heard a sound, and a voice [saying], What then? Shall a man be pure before the Lord? or shall such an one be [counted] blameless in his deeds, seeing He does not confide in His servants, and has charged even His angels with perversity? The heaven is not clean in His sight: how much less they that dwell in houses of clay, of which also we ourselves were made! He smote them as a moth; and from morning even until evening they endure not. Because they could furnish no assistance to themselves, they perished. He breathed upon them, and they died, because they had no wisdom. But call now, if any one will answer you, or if you will look to any of the holy angels; for wrath destroys the foolish man, and envy kills him that is in error. I have seen the foolish taking root, but their habitation was presently consumed. Let their sons be far from safety; let them be despised before the gates of those less than themselves, and there shall be none to deliver. For what was prepared for them, the righteous shall eat; and they shall not be delivered from evil."

CHAPTER 40 -- LET US PRESERVE IN THE CHURCH THE ORDER APPOINTED BY GOD.

These things therefore being manifest to us, and since we look into the depths of the divine knowledge, it behoves us to do all things in [their proper] order, which the Lord has commanded us to perform at stated times. He has enjoined offerings [to be presented] and service to be performed [to Him], and that not thoughtlessly or irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours. Where and by whom He desires these things to be done, He Himself has fixed by His own supreme will, in order that all things being piously done according to His good pleasure, may be acceptable to Him. Those, therefore, who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed; for inasmuch as they follow the laws of the Lord, they sin not. For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites. The layman is bound by the laws that pertain to laymen.

CHAPTER 41 -- CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

Let every one of you, brethren, give thanks to God in his own order, living in all good conscience, with becoming gravity, and not going beyond the rule of the ministry prescribed to him. Not in every place, brethren, are the daily sacrifices offered, or the peace-offerings, or the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings, but in Jerusalem only. And even there they are not offered in any place, but only at the altar before the temple, that which is offered being first carefully examined by the high priest and the ministers already mentioned. Those, therefore, who do anything beyond that which is agreeable to His will, are punished with death. You see, brethren, that the greater the knowledge that has been vouchsafed to us, the greater also is the danger to which we are exposed.

CHAPTER 42 -- THE ORDER OF MINISTERS IN THE CHURCH.

The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits [of their labours], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe. Nor was this any new thing, since indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus says the Scripture a certain place, "I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith."

CHAPTER 43 -- MOSES OF OLD STILLED THE CONTENTION WHICH AROSE CONCERNING THE PRIESTLY DIGNITY.

And what wonder is it if those in Christ who were entrusted with such a duty by God, appointed those [ministers] before mentioned, when the blessed Moses also, "a faithful servant in all his house," noted down in the sacred books all the injunctions which were given him, and when the other prophets also followed him, bearing witness with one consent to the ordinances which he had appointed? For, when rivalry arose concerning the priesthood, and the tribes were contending among themselves as to which of them should be adorned with that glorious title, he commanded the twelve princes of the tribes to bring him their rods, each one being inscribed with the name of the tribe. And he took them and bound them [together], and sealed them with the rings of the princes of the tribes, and laid them up in the tabernacle of witness on the table of God. And having shut the doors of the tabernacle, he sealed the keys, as he had done the rods, and said to them, Men and brethren, the tribe whose rod shall blossom has God chosen to fulfil the office of the priesthood, and to minister to Him. And when the morning was come, he assembled all Israel, six hundred thousand men, and showed the seals to the princes of the tribes, and opened the tabernacle of witness, and brought forth the rods. And the rod of Aaron was found not only to have blossomed, but to bear fruit upon it. What think you, beloved? Did not Moses know beforehand that this would happen? Undoubtedly he knew; but he acted thus, that there might be no sedition in Israel, and that the name of the true and only God might be glorified; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 44 -- THE ORDINANCES OF THE APOSTLES, THAT THERE MIGHT BE NO CONTENTION RESPECTING THE PRIESTLY OFFICE.

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those

appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties. Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world]; for they have no fear lest any one deprive them of the place now appointed them. But we see that you have removed some men of excellent behaviour from the ministry, which they fulfilled blamelessly and with honour.

CHAPTER 45 -- IT IS THE PART OF THE WICKED TO VEX THE RIGHTEOUS.

Ye are fond of contention, brethren, and full of zeal about things which do not pertain to salvation. Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit. Observe that nothing of an unjust or counterfeit character is written in them. There you will not find that the righteous were cast off by men who themselves were holy. The righteous were indeed persecuted, but only by the wicked. They were cast into prison, but only by the unholy; they were stoned, but only by transgressors; they were slain, but only by the accursed, and such as had conceived an unrighteous envy against them. Exposed to such sufferings, they endured them gloriously. For what shall we say, brethren? Was Daniel s cast into the den of lions by such as feared God? Were Ananias, and Azarias, and Mishael shut up in a furnace of fire by those who observed the great and glorious worship of the Most High? Far from us be such a thought! Who, then, were they that did such things? The hateful, and those full of all wickedness, were roused to such a pitch of fury, that they inflicted torture on those who served God with a holy and blameless purpose [of heart], not knowing that the Most High is the Defender and Protector of all such as with a pure conscience venerate" His all-excellent name; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. But they who with confidence endured [these things] are now heirs of glory and honour, and have been exalted and made illustrious by God in their memorial for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 46 -- LET US CLEAVE TO THE RIGHTEOUS: YOUR STRIFE IS PERNICIOUS.

Such examples, therefore, brethren, it is right that we should follow; since it is written, "Cleave to the holy, for those who cleave to them shall [themselves] be made holy." And again, in another place, [the Scripture] says, "With a harmless man you shall prove thyself harmless, and with an elect man you shall be elect, and with a perverse man you shall show thyself perverse." Let us cleave, therefore, to the innocent and righteous, since these are the elect of God. Why are there strifes, and tumults, and divisions, and schisms, and wars among you? Have we not [all] one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? And have we not one calling in Christ? Why do we divide and tear to pieces the members of Christ, and raise up strife against our own body, and have reached such a height of madness as to forget that "we are members one of another?" Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, "Woe to that man [by whom offences come]! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yea, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about [his neck], and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones. Your schism has subverted [the faith of] many, has discouraged many, has given rise to doubt in many, and has caused grief to us all. And still your sedition continues.

CHAPTER 47 -- YOUR RECENT DISCORD IS WORSE THAN THE FORMER WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE TIMES OF PAUL.

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you. But that inclination for one above another entailed less guilt upon you, inasmuch as your partialities were then shown towards apostles, already of high reputation, and towards a man whom they had approved. But now reflect who those are that have perverted you, and lessened the renown of your far-famed brotherly love. It is disgraceful, beloved, yea, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession, that such a thing should be heard of as that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters. And this rumour has reached not only us, but those also who are unconnected with us; so that, through your infatuation, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, while danger is also brought upon yourselves.

CHAPTER 48 -- LET US RETURN TO THE PRACTICE OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

Let us therefore, with all haste, put an end to this [state of things]; and let us fall down before the Lord, and beseech Him with tears, that He would mercifully be reconciled to us, and restore us to our former seemly and holy practice of brotherly love. For [such conduct] is the gate of righteousness, which is set open for the attainment of life, as it is written, "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go in by them, and will praise the Lord: this is the gate of the Lord: the righteous shall enter in by it." Although, therefore, many gates have been set open, yet this gate of righteousness is that gate in Christ by which blessed are all they that have entered in and have directed their way in holiness and righteousness, doing all things without disorder. Let a man be faithful: let him be powerful in the utterance of knowledge; let him be wise in judging of words; let him be pure in all his deeds; yet the more he seems to be superior to others [in these respects], the more humble-minded ought he to be, and to seek the common good of all, and not merely his own advantage.

CHAPTER 49 -- THE PRAISE OF LOVE.

Let him who has love in Christ keep the commandments of Christ. Who can describe the [blessed] bond of the love of God? What man is able to tell the excellence of its beauty, as it ought to be told? The height to which love exalts is unspeakable. Love unites us to God. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love bears all things, is long-suffering in all things. There is nothing base, nothing arrogant in love. Love admits of no schisms: love gives rise to no seditions: love does all things in harmony. By love have all the elect of God been made perfect; without love nothing is well-pleasing to God. In love has the Lord taken us to Himself. On account of the Love he bore us, Jesus Christ our Lord gave His blood for us by the will of God; His flesh for our flesh, and His soul for our souls.

CHAPTER 50 -- LET US PRAY TO BE THOUGHT WORTHY OF LOVE.

Ye see, beloved, how great and wonderful a thing is love, and that there is no declaring its perfection. Who is fit to be found in it, except such as God has vouchsafed to render so? Let us pray, therefore, and implore of His mercy, that we may live blameless in love, free from all human partialities for one above another. All the generations from Adam even to this day have passed away; but those who, through the grace of God, have been made perfect in love, now possess a place among the godly, and shall be made manifest at the revelation of the kingdom of Christ. For it is written, "Enter into thy secret chambers for a little time, until my wrath and fury pass away; and I will remember a propitious day, and will raise you up out of your graves." Blessed are we, beloved, if we keep the commandments of God in the harmony of love; that so through love our sins may be forgiven us. For it is written, "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not impute to him, and in whose mouth there is no guile." This

blessedness comes upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 51 -- LET THE PARTAKERS IN STRIFE ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SINS.

Let us therefore implore forgiveness for all those transgressions which through any [suggestion] of the adversary we have committed. And those who have been the leaders of sedition and disagreement ought to have respect to the common hope. For such as live in fear and love would rather that they themselves than their neighbours should be involved in suffering. And they prefer to bear blame themselves, rather than that the concord which has been well and piously handed down to us should suffer. For it is better that a man should acknowledge his transgressions than that he should harden his heart, as the hearts of those were hardened who stirred up sedition against Moses the servant of God, and whose condemnation was made manifest [to all]. For they went down alive into Hades, and death swallowed them up. Pharaoh with his army and all the princes of Egypt, and the chariots with their riders, were sunk in the depths of the Red Sea, and perished, for no other reason than that their foolish hearts were hardened, after so many signs and wonders had been wrought in the land of Egypt by Moses the servant of God.

CHAPTER 52 -- SUCH A CONFESSION IS PLEASING TO GOD.

The Lord, brethren, stands in need of nothing; and He desires nothing of any one, except that confession be made to Him. For, says the elect David, "I will confess to the Lord; and that will please Him more than a young bullock that has horns and hoofs. Let the poor see it, and be glad." And again he says, "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay your vows to the Most High. And call upon Me in the day of your trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." For "the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit."

CHAPTER 53 -- THE LOVE OF MOSES TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.

Ye understand, beloved, you understand well the Sacred Scriptures, and you have looked very earnestly into the oracles of God. Call then these things to your remembrance. When Moses went up into the mount, and abode there, with fasting and humiliation, forty days and forty nights, the Lord said to him, "Moses, Moses, get down quickly from here; for your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have committed iniquity. They have quickly departed from the way in which I commanded them to walk, and have made to themselves molten images." And the Lord said to him, "I have spoken to you once and again, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: let Me destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make you a great and wonderful nation, and one much more numerous than this." But Moses said, "Far be it from You, Lord: pardon the sin of this people; else blot me also out of the book of the living." O marvellous love! O insuperable perfection! The servant speaks freely to his Lord, and asks forgiveness for the people, or begs that he himself might perish along with them.

CHAPTER 54 -- HE WHO IS FULL OF LOVE WILL INCUR EVERY LOSS, THAT PEACE MAY BE RESTORED TO THE CHURCH.

Who then among you is noble-minded? who compassionate? who full of love? Let him declare, "If on my account sedition and disagreement and schisms have arisen, I will depart, I will go away whithersoever you desire, and I will do whatever the majority commands; only let the flock of Christ live on terms of peace with the presbyters set over it." He that acts thus shall procure to himself great glory in the Lord; and every place will welcome him. For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." These things they who live a godly life, that is never to be repented of, both have done and always will do.

CHAPTER 55 -- EXAMPLES OF SUCH LOVE.

To bring forward some examples from among the heathen: Many kings and princes, in times of pestilence, when they had been instructed by an oracle, have given themselves up to death, in order that by their own blood they might deliver their fellow-citizens [from destruction]. Many have gone forth from their own cities, that so sedition might be brought to an end within them. We know many among ourselves who have given themselves up to bonds, in order that they might ransom others. Many, too, have surrendered themselves to slavery, that with the price which they received for themselves, they might provide food for others. Many women also, being strengthened by the grace of God, have performed numerous manly exploits. The blessed Judith, when her city was besieged, asked of the elders permission to go forth into the camp of the strangers; and, exposing herself to danger, she went out for the love which she bore to her country and people then besieged; and the Lord delivered Holofernes into the hands of a woman. Esther also, being perfect in faith, exposed herself to no less danger, in order to deliver the twelve tribes of Israel from impending destruction. For with fasting and humiliation she entreated the everlasting God, who sees all things; and He, perceiving the humility of her spirit, delivered the people for whose sake she had encountered peril.

CHAPTER 56 -- LET US ADMONISH AND CORRECT ONE ANOTHER.

Let us then also pray for those who have fallen into any sin, that meekness and humility may be given to them, so that they may submit, not to us, but to the will of God. For in this way they shall secure a fruitful and perfect remembrance from us, with sympathy for them, both in our prayers to God, and our mention of them to the saints. Let us receive correction, beloved, on account of which no one should feel displeased. Those exhortations by which we admonish one another are both good [in themselves] and highly profitable, for they tend to unite us to the will of God. For thus says the holy Word: "The Lord has severely chastened me, yet has not given me over to death." "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." "The righteous," it says, "shall chasten me in mercy, and reprove me; but let not the oil of sinners make fat my head." And again he says, "Blessed is the man whom the Lord reproves, and reject not the warning of the Almighty. For He causes sorrow, and again restores [to gladness]; He wounds, and His hands make whole. He shall deliver you in six troubles, yea, in the seventh no evil shall touch you. In famine He shall rescue you from death, and in war He shall free you from the power of the sword. From the scourge of the tongue will He hide you, and you shall not fear when evil comes. you shall hugh at the unrighteous and the wicked, and shall not be afraid of the beasts of the field. For the wild beasts shall be at peace with you: then shall you know that your house shall be in peace, and the habitation of your tabernacle shall not fail? You shall know also that your seed shall be great, and your children like the grass of the field. And you shall come to the grave like ripened corn which is reaped in its season, or like a heap of the threshing-floor which is gathered together at the proper time." You see, beloved, that protection is afforded to those who are chastened of the Lord; for since God is good, He corrects us, that we may be admonished by His holy chastisement.

CHAPTER 57 -- LET THE AUTHORS OF SEDITION SUBMIT THEMSELVES.

Ye therefore, who laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to the presbyters, and receive correction so as to repent, bending the knees of your hearts. Learn to be subject, laying aside the proud and arrogant self-confidence of your tongue. For it is better for you that you should occupy a humble but honourable place in the flock of Christ, than that, being highly exalted, you should be cast out from the hope of His people. For thus speaks all-virtuous Wisdom: "Behold, I will bring forth to you the words of My Spirit, and I will teach you My speech. Since I called, and you did not hear; I held forth My words, and you regarded not, but set at naught My counsels, and yielded not at My reproofs; therefore I too will laugh at your destruction; yea, I will rejoice when ruin comes upon you, and when sudden confusion overtakes you, when overturning

presents itself like a tempest, or when tribulation and oppression fall upon you. For it shall come to pass, that when you call upon Me, I will not hear you; the wicked shall seek Me, and they shall not find Me. For they hated wisdom, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; nor would they listen to My counsels, but despised My reproofs. So they shall eat the fruits of their own way, and they shall be filled with their own ungodliness." . . .

CHAPTER 58 -- BLESSINGS SOUGHT FOR ALL THAT CALL UPON GOD.

May God, who sees all things, and who is the Ruler of all spirits and the Lord of all flesh -- who chose our Lord Jesus Christ and us through Him to be a peculiar people -- grant to every soul that calls upon His glorious and holy Name, faith, fear, peace, patience, long-suffering, self-control, purity, and sobriety, to the well-pleasing of His Name, through our High Priest and Protector, Jesus Christ, by whom be to Him glory, and majesty, and power, and honour, both now and for evermore. Amen.

CHAPTER 59 -- THE CORINTHIANS ARE EXHORTED SPEEDILY TO SEND BACK WORD THAT PEACE HAS BEEN RESTORED. THE BENEDICTION.

Send back speedily to us in peace and with joy these our messengers to you: Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, with Fortunatus: that they may the sooner announce to us the peace and harmony we so earnestly desire and long for [among you], and that we may the more quickly rejoice over the good order re-established among you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and with all everywhere that are the called of God through Him, by whom be to Him glory, honour, power, majesty, and eternal dominion, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

Jonathan Edwards

Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” [1 John 4:1]

In the apostolic age, there was the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God that ever was; both as to his extraordinary influences and gifts, and his ordinary operations, in convincing, converting, enlightening, and sanctifying the souls of men. But as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also abound: the devil was abundant in mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God, as is manifest by innumerable passages of the apostles’ writings. This made it very necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules, distinguishing and clear marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of the true from the false without danger of being imposed upon. The giving of such rules is the plain design of this chapter, where we have this matter more expressly and fully treated of than any where else in the Bible. The apostle, of set purpose, undertakes to supply the church of God with such marks of the true Spirit as may be plain and safe, and well accommodated to use and practice; and that the subject might be clearly and sufficiently handled, he insists upon it throughout the chapter, which makes it wonderful that what is here said is no more taken notice of in this extraordinary day, when there is such an uncommon and extensive operation on the minds of people, such a variety of opinions concerning it, and so much talk about the work of the Spirit.

The apostle’s discourse on this subject is introduced by an occasional mention of the indwelling of the Spirit, as the sure evidence of an interest in Christ. “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” Whence we may infer, that the design of the apostle is not only to give marks whereby to distinguish the true Spirit from the false, in his extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles, but also in his ordinary influences on the minds of his people, in order to their union to Christ, and being built up in him; which is also manifest from the marks themselves that are given, which we shall hereafter notice.

The words of the text are an introduction to this discourse of the distinguishing signs of the true and false Spirit.--Before the apostle proceeds to lay down these signs, he exhorteth Christians, first, against an over credulousness, and a forwardness to admit every specious appearance as the work of a true Spirit. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” And, second, he shows, that there were many counterfeits, “because many false prophets were gone out into the world.” These did not only pretend to have the Spirit of God in his extraordinary gifts of inspiration, but also to be the great friends and favourites of heaven, to be eminently holy persons, and to have much of the ordinary saving, sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God on their hearts. Hence we are to look upon these words as a direction to examine and try their pretences to the Spirit of God, in both these respects.

My design therefore at this time is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see in others. And here I would observe, that we are to take the *Scriptures* as our guide in such cases. This is the great and standing rule which God has given to his church, in order to guide them in things relating to the great concerns of their souls; and it is an infallible and sufficient rule. There are undoubtedly sufficient marks given

to guide the church of God in this great affair of judging of spirits, without which it would lie open to woeful delusion, and would be remedilessly exposed to be imposed on and devoured by its enemies. And we need not be afraid to trust these rules. Doubtless that Spirit who indited the Scriptures knew how to give us good rules, by which to distinguish his operations from all that is falsely pretended to be from him. And this, as I observed before, the Spirit of God has here done of set purpose, and done it more particularly and fully than any where else: so that in my present discourse I shall go no where else for rules or marks for the trial of spirits, but shall confine myself to those that I find in this chapter.--But before I proceed particularly to speak to these, I would prepare my way by, FIRST, observing *negatively*, in some instances, what are *not signs* or evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.

SECT. 1.

Negative Signs; *or, What are no signs by which we are to judge of a work--and especially, What are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God.*

NOTHING can be certainly concluded from this, That a work is carried on in a way very unusual and extraordinary; provided the variety or difference be such, as may still be comprehended within the limits of scripture rules. What the church has been used to, is not a rule by which we are to judge; because there may be new and extraordinary works of God, and he has heretofore evidently wrought in an extraordinary manner. He has brought to pass new things, strange works; and has wrought in such a manner as to surprise both men and angels. And as God has done thus in times past, so we have no reason to think but that he will do so still. The prophecies of Scripture give us reason to think that God has things to accomplish, which have never yet been seen. No deviation from what has hitherto been usual, let it be never so great, is an argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, if it be no deviation from his prescribed rule. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in his operation; and we know that he uses a great variety; and we cannot tell how great a variety he may use, within the compass of the rules he himself has fixed. We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself.

I. Therefore it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not from God's Holy Spirit because of the extraordinary degree in which the minds of persons are influenced.

If they seem to have an extraordinary conviction of the dreadful nature of sin, and a very uncommon sense of the misery of a Christless condition--or extraordinary views of the certainty and glory of divine things,--and are proportionably moved with very extraordinary affections of fear and sorrow, desire, love, or joy: or if the apparent change be very sudden, and the work be carried on with very unusual swiftness--and the persons affected are very numerous, and many of them are very young, with other unusual circumstances, not infringing upon scripture marks of a work of the Spirit--these things are no argument that the work is not of the Spirit of God.--The extraordinary and unusual degree of influence, and power of operation, if in its nature it be agreeable to the rules and marks given in Scripture, is rather an argument in its favour; for by how much higher the degree which in its nature is agreeable to the rule, so much the more is there of conformity to the rule; and so much the more evident that conformity. When things are in small degrees, though they be really agreeable to the rule, it is not so easily seen whether their nature agrees with the rule.

There is a great aptness in persons to doubt of things that are strange; especially elderly persons, to think that to be right which they have never been used to in their day, and have not heard of in the days of their day, and have not heard of in the days of their fathers. But if it be a good argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it is very unusual, then it was so in the apostles' days. The work of the Spirit then, was carried on in a manner that, in very many respects, was altogether new; such as never had been seen or heard since the world stood. The work was then carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever; nor had there been

seen before such mighty and wonderful effects of the Spirit of God in sudden changes, and such great engagedness and zeal in great multitudes--such a sudden alteration in towns, cities, and countries; such a swift progress, and vast extent of the work--and many other extraordinary circumstances might be mentioned. The great unusualness of the work surprised the Jews; they knew not what to make of it, but could not believe it to be the work of God: many looked upon the persons that were the subjects of it as bereft of reason; as you may see in Acts ii. 13. xxvi. 24. and 1 Cor. iv. 10.

And we have reason from scripture prophecy to suppose, that at the commencement of that last and greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God, that is to be in the latter ages of the world, the manner of the work will be very extraordinary, and such as never has yet been seen; so that there shall be occasion then to say, as in Isa. lxvi. 8. "Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath 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 be reasonably expected that the extraordinary manner of the work then, will bear some proportion to the very extraordinary events, and that glorious change in the state of the world, which God will bring to pass by it.

II. A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength.

The influence persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or other, by such effects on the body; and the reason is, because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule. We cannot conclude that persons are under the influence of the true Spirit because we see such effects upon their bodies, because this is not given as a mark of the true Spirit; nor on the other hand, have we any reason to conclude, from any such outward appearances, that persons are not under the influence of the Spirit of God, because there is no rule of Scripture given us to judge of spirits by, that does either expressly or indirectly exclude such effects on the body, nor does reason exclude them. It is easily accounted for from the consideration of the nature of divine and eternal things, and the nature of man, and the laws of the union between soul and body, how a right influence, a true and proper sense of things, should have such effects on the body, even those that are of the most extraordinary kind, such as taking away the bodily strength, or throwing the body into great agonies, and extorting loud outcries. There are none of us but do suppose, and would have been ready at any time to say it, that the misery of hell is doubtless so dreadful, and eternity so vast, that if a person should have a clear apprehension of that misery as it is, it would be more that his feeble frame could bear, and especially if at the same time he saw himself in great danger of it, and to be utterly uncertain whether he should be delivered from it, yea, and to have no security from it one day or hour. If we consider human nature, we must not wonder, that when persons have a great sense of that which is so amazingly dreadful, and also have a great view of their own wickedness and God's anger, that things seem to them to forebode speedy and immediate destruction. We see the nature of man to be such that when he is in danger of some terrible calamity to which he is greatly exposed, he is ready upon every occasion to think, that *now* it is coming.--When persons' hearts are full of fear, in time of war, they are ready to tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and to expect the enemy every minute, and to say within themselves, *now* I shall be slain. If we should suppose that a person saw himself hanging over a great pit, full of fierce and glowing flames, by a thread that he knew to be very weak, and not sufficient to bear his weight, and knew that multitudes had been in such circumstances before, and that most of them had fallen and perished, and saw nothing within reach, that he could take hold of to save him, what distress would he be in! How ready to think that *now* the thread was breaking, that now, *this minute*, he should be swallowed up in those dreadful flames! And would not he be ready to cry out in such circumstances? How much more those that see themselves in this manner hanging over an infinitely more dreadful pit, or held over it in the hand of God, who at the same time they see to be exceedingly provoked! No wonder that the wrath of God, when manifested but a little to the soul, overbears human strength.

So it may easily be accounted for, that a true sense of the glorious excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his wonderful dying love, and the exercise of a truly spiritual love and joy, should be such as very much to overcome the bodily strength. We are all ready to own, that no man can see God and live, and that it is but a very small part of that apprehension of the glory and love of Christ, which the saints enjoy in heaven, that 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 unaccountable that the queen of Sheba fainted, and had her bodily strength taken away, when she came to see the glory of Solomon, much less is it unaccountable that she who is the antitype of the queen of Sheba, (*viz.*) the Church, that is brought, as it were, from the utmost 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 be so in that prosperous, peaceful, glorious kingdom, which he will set up in the world in its latter age.

Some object against such extraordinary appearances, that we have no instances of them recorded in the New Testament, under the extraordinary effusions of the Spirit. Were this allowed, I can see no force in the objection, if neither reason, nor any rule of Scripture, exclude such things; especially considering what was observed under the foregoing particular. I do not know that we have any express mention in the New Testament of any person's weeping, or groaning, or sighing through fear of hell, or a sense of God's anger; but is there any body so foolish as from hence to argue, that in whomsoever these things appear, their convictions are not from the Spirit of God? And the reason why we do not argue thus, is, because these are easily accounted for, from what we know of the nature of man, and from what the Scripture informs us in general, concerning the nature of eternal things, and the nature of the convictions of God's Spirit; so that there is no need that any thing should be said in particular concerning these external, circumstantial effects. Nobody supposes that there is any need of express scripture for every external, accidental manifestation of the inward motion of the mind: and though such circumstances are not particularly recorded in sacred history, yet there is a great deal of reason to think, from the general accounts we have, that it could not be otherwise than that such things must be in those days. And there is also reason to think, that such great outpouring of the Spirit was not wholly without those more extraordinary effects on persons' bodies. The jailer in particular, seems to have been an instance of that nature, when he, in the utmost distress and amazement, came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. His falling down at that time does not seem to be a designed putting himself into a posture of supplication, or humble address to Paul and Silas; for he seems not to have said anything to them then; but he first brought them out, and then he says to them, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Acts xvi. 29, and 30. But his falling down seems to be from the same cause as his trembling. The psalmist gives an account of his crying out aloud, and a great weakening of his body under convictions of conscience, and a sense of the guilt of sin, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."--We may at least argue so much from it, that such an effect of conviction of sin may well in some cases be supposed; for if we should suppose any thing of an *anæsis* in the expressions, yet the psalmist would not represent his case by what would be absurd, and to which no degree of that exercise of mind he spoke of, would have any tendency.--We read of the disciples, Matt. xiv. 26. that when they saw Christ coming to them in the storm, and took him for some terrible enemy, threatening their destruction in that storm, "they cried out for fear." Why then should it be thought strange, that persons should cry out for fear, when God appears to them, as a terrible enemy, and they see themselves in great danger of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of eternal misery? The spouse, once and again, speaks of herself as overpowered with the love of Christ, so as to weaken her body, and make her faint. Cant. ii. 5. "Stay my with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." And chap. v. 8. "I charge you, () ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." From whence we may at least argue, that such an effect may well be supposed to arise, from such a cause in the saints in some cases, and that such an effect will sometimes be seen in the church of Christ.

It is a weak objection, that the impressions of enthusiasts have a great effect on their bodies. That the Quakers used to tremble, is no argument that Saul, afterwards Paul, and the jailer, did not tremble from real convictions of conscience. Indeed all such objections from effects on the body, let them be greater or less, seem to be exceeding frivolous; they who argue thence, proceed in the dark, they know not what ground they go upon, nor by what rule they judge. The root and course of things is to be looked at, and the nature of the operations and affections are to be inquired into, and examined by the rule of God's word, and not the motions of the blood and animal spirits.

III. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of people is not the work of the Spirit of God, that it occasions a great deal of noise about religion.

For though true religion be of a contrary nature to that of the Pharisees--which was ostentatious, and delighted to set itself forth to the view of men for their applause--yet such is human nature, that it is morally impossible there should be a great concern, strong affection, and a general engagedness of mind amongst a people, without causing a notable, visible, and open commotion and alteration amongst that people.--Surely, it is no argument that the minds of persons are not under the influence of God's Spirit, that they are very much moved: for indeed spiritual and eternal things are so great, and of such infinite concern, that there is a great absurdity in men's being but moderately moved and affected by them; and surely it is no argument that they are not moved by the Spirit of God, that they are affected with these things in some measure as they deserve, or in some proportion to their importance. And when was there ever any such thing since the world stood, as a people in general being greatly affected in any affair whatsoever, without noise or stir? The nature of man will not allow it.

Indeed Christ says, Luke xvii. 20. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." That is, it will not consist in what is outward and visible; it shall not be like earthly kingdoms, set up with outward pomp, in some particular place, which shall be especially the royal city, and seat of the kingdom; as Christ explains himself in the words next following, "Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you." Not that the kingdom of God shall be set up in the world, on the ruin of Satan's kingdom, without a very observable, great effect: a mighty change in the state of things, to the observation and astonishment of the whole world: for such an effect as this is even held forth in the prophecies of Scripture, and is so by Christ himself, in this very place, and even in his own explanation of these forementioned words, ver. 24. "For as the lightning that lightneth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto another part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day." This is to distinguish Christ's coming to set up his kingdom, from the coming of false Christs, which he tells us will be in a private manner in the deserts, and in the secret chambers; whereas this event of setting up the kingdom of God, should be open and public, in the sight of the whole world with clear manifestation, like lightning that cannot be hid, but glares in every one's eyes, and shines from one side of heaven to the other. And we find, that when Christ's kingdom came, by that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit in the apostles' days, it occasioned a great stir every where. What a mighty opposition was there in Jerusalem, on occasion of that great effusion of the Spirit! And so in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places! The 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 xvii. 6.

IV. 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 the subjects of it, have great impressions made on their imaginations.

That persons have many impressions on their imaginations, does not prove that they have nothing else. It is easy to be accounted for, that there should be much of this nature amongst a people, where a great multitude of all kinds of constitutions have their minds engaged with intense thought and strong affections about invisible

things; yea, it would be strange if there should not. Such is our nature, that we cannot think of things invisible, without a degree of imagination. I dare appeal to any man, of the greatest powers of mind, whether he is able to fix his thoughts on God, or Christ, or the things of another world, without imaginary ideas attending his meditations? And the more engaged the mind is, and the more intense the contemplation and affection, still the more lively and strong the imaginary idea will ordinarily be; especially when attended with surprise. And this is the case when the mental prospect is very new, and takes strong hold of the passions, as fear or joy; and when the change of the state and views of the mind is sudden, from a contrary extreme, as from that which was extremely dreadful, to that which is extremely ravishing and delightful. And it is no wonder that many persons do not well distinguish between that which is imaginary and that which is intellectual and spiritual; and that they are apt to lay too much weight on the imaginary part, and are most ready to speak of that in the account they give of their experiences, especially persons of less understanding and of distinguishing capacity.

As God has given us such a faculty as the imagination, and so made us that we cannot think of things spiritual and invisible, without some exercise of this faculty; so, it appears to me, that such is our state and nature, that this faculty is really subservient and helpful to the other faculties of the mind, when a proper use is made of it; though oftentimes, when the imagination is too strong, and the other faculties weak, it overbears, and disturbs them in their exercise. It appears to me manifest, in many instances with which I have been acquainted, that God has really made use of this faculty to truly divine purposes; especially in some that are more ignorant. God seems to condescend to their circumstances, and deal with them as babes; as of old he instructed his church, whilst in a state of ignorance and minority, by types and outward representations. I can see nothing unreasonable in such a position. Let others who have much occasion to deal with souls in spiritual concerns, judge whether experience does not confirm it.

It is no argument that a work is not of the Spirit of God, that some who are the subjects of it have been in a kind of ecstasy, wherein they have been carried beyond themselves, and have had their minds transported into a train of strong and pleasing imaginations, and a kind of visions, as though they were rapt up even to heaven, and there saw glorious sights. I have been acquainted with some such instances, and I see no need of bringing in the help of the devil into the account that we give of these things, nor yet of supposing them to be of the same nature with the visions of the prophets, or St. Paul's rapture into paradise. Human nature, under these intense exercises and affections, is all that need be brought into the account. If it may be well accounted for, that persons under a true sense of the glorious and wonderful greatness and excellency of divine things, and soul-ravishing views of the beauty and love of Christ, should have the strength of nature overpowered, as I have already shown that it may; then I think it is not at all strange, that amongst great numbers that are thus affected and overborne, there should be some persons of particular constitutions that should have their imaginations thus affected. The effect is no other than what bears a proportion and analogy to other effects of the strong exercise of their minds. It is no wonder, when the thoughts are so fixed, and the affections so strong--and the whole soul so engaged, ravished, and swallowed up--that all other parts of the body are so affected, as to be deprived of their strength, and the whole frame ready to dissolve. Is it any wonder that, in such a case, the brain in particular,(especially in some constitutions,) which we know is most especially affected by intense contemplations and exercises of mind, should be so affected, that its strength and spirits should for a season be diverted, and taken off from impressions made on the organs of external sense, and be wholly employed in a train of pleasing delightful imaginations, corresponding with the present frame of the mind. Some are ready to interpret such things wrong, and to lay too much weight on them, as prophetic visions, divine revelations and sometimes significations from heaven of what shall come to pass; which the issue, in some instances I have known, has shown to be otherwise. But yet, it appears to me that such things are evidently sometimes from the Spirit of God, though indirectly; that is, their extraordinary frame of mind, and that strong and lively sense of divine things which is the occasion of them, is from his Spirit; and also as the mind continues in its holy frame, and retains a divine sense of the excellency of spiritual things even in its rapture; which holy frame and sense is

from the Spirit of God, though the imaginations that attend it are but accidental, and therefore there is commonly something or other in them that is confused, improper, and false.

V. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that example is a great means of it.

It is surely no argument that an effect is not from God, that means are used in producing it; for we know that it is God's manner to make use of means in carrying on his work in the world, and it is no more an argument against the divinity of an effect, that this means is made use of, than if it was by any other means. It is agreeable to Scripture that persons should be influenced by one another's good example. The Scripture directs us to set good examples to that end, Matt. v. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 1. 1 Tim. iv. 12. Titus ii. 7. and also directs us to be influenced by the good examples of others, and to follow them, 2 Cor. viii. 1-7. Heb. vi. 12. Phil. iii. 17. 1 Cor. iv. 16. and chap. xi. 1. 2 Thess. iii. 9. 1 Thess. i. 7. By which it appears, that example is one of God's means; and certainly it is no argument that a work is not of God, that his own means are made use of to effect it.

And as it is a *scriptural* way of carrying on God's work, by example, so it is a *reasonable* way. It is no argument that men are not influenced by reason, that they are influenced by example. This way of persons holding forth truth to one another, has a tendency to enlighten the mind, and to convince reason. None will deny but that for persons to signify things one to another by words, may rationally be supposed to tend to enlighten each other's minds; but the same thing may be signified by actions, and signified much more fully and effectually. Words are of no use any otherwise than as they convey our own ideas to others; but actions, in some cases, may do it much more fully. There is a language in actions; and in some cases, much more clear and convincing than in words. It is therefore no argument against the goodness of the effect, that persons are greatly affected by seeing other so; yea, though the impression be made only by seeing the tokens of great and extraordinary affection in others in their behaviour, taking for granted what they are affected with, without hearing them say one word. There may be language sufficient in such a case in their behaviour only, to convey their minds to others, and to signify to them their sense of things more than can possibly be done by words only. If a person should see another under extreme bodily torment, he might receive much clearer ideas, and more convincing evidence of what he suffered by his actions in his misery, than he could do only by the words of an unaffected indifferent relater. In like manner he might receive a greater idea of any thing that is excellent and very delightful, from the behaviour of one that is in actual enjoyment, than by the dull narration of one which is inexperienced and insensible himself. I desire that this matter may be examined by the strictest reason.--Is it not manifest, that effects produced in persons' minds are rational, since not only weak and ignorant people are much influenced by example, but also those that make the greatest boast of strength of reason, are more influenced by reason held forth in this way, than almost any other way. Indeed the religious affections of many when raised by this means, as by hearing the word preached, or any other means, may prove flashy, and soon vanish, as Christ represents the stony-ground hearers; but the affections of some thus moved by example, are abiding, and prove to be of saving issue.

There never yet was a time of remarkable pouring out of the Spirit, and great revival of religion, but that example had a main hand. So it was at the reformation, and in the apostles' days, in Jerusalem and Samaria, and Ephesus, and other parts of the world, as will be most manifest to any one that attends to the accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles. As in those days one person was moved by another, so one city or town was influenced by the example of another, 1 Thess. i. 7,8. "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia, for from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad."

It is no valid objection against examples being so much used, that the Scripture speaks of the word as the principal means of carrying on God's work; for the word of God is the principal means, nevertheless, by which

other means operate and are made effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual; for all that is visible to the eye is unintelligible and vain, without the word of God to instruct and guide the mind. It is the word of God that is indeed held forth and applied by example, as the word of the Lord sounded forth to other towns in Macedonia, and Achaia, by the example of those that believe in Thessalonica.

That example should be a great means of propagating the church of God seems to be several ways signified 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 whither she went, and would lodge where she lodged; and that Naomi's people should be her people, and Naomi's God, her God. Ruth, who was the ancestral mother of David, and of Christ was undoubtedly a great type of the church; upon which account her history is inserted 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 of the conversion not only of the Gentile church but of every sinner, that is naturally an alien and stranger, but in his conversion forgets his own people, and fathers house, and becomes a fellow-citizen with the saints and a true Israelite. The same seems to be signified in the effect the example of the spouse, when she was sick of love, has on the daughters of Jerusalem, *i.e.* visible Christians, who are first awakened, by seeing the spouse in such extraordinary circumstances, and then converted. See Cant. v. 8, 9. and vi. 1. And this is undoubtedly one way that "the Spirit and the bride say, come." Rev. xxii. 17. *i.e.* the Spirit in the bride. It is foretold, that the work of God should be very much carried on by this means, in the last great outpouring of the Spirit, that should introduce the glorious day of the church, so often spoken of in Scripture, Zech. viii. 21-23. "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people, and strong nations, shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

VI. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that many, who seem to be the subjects of it, are guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct.

We are to consider that the end for which God pours out his Spirit, is to make men holy, and not to make them politicians. Is it no wonder that, in a mixed multitude of all sorts--wise and unwise, young and old, of weak and strong natural abilities, under strong impressions of mind--there are many who behave themselves imprudently. There are but few that know how to conduct them under vehement affections of any kind, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature; to do so requires a great deal of discretion, strength, and steadiness of mind. A thousand imprudences will not prove a work to be not of the Spirit of God; yea, if there be not only imprudences, but many things prevailing that are irregular, and really contrary to the rules of God's holy word. That it should be thus may be well accounted for from the exceeding weakness of human nature, together with the remaining darkness and corruption of those that are yet the subjects of the saving influences of God's Spirit, and have a real zeal for God.

We have a remarkable instance, in the New Testament, of a people that partook largely of that great effusion of the Spirit in the apostles' days, among whom there nevertheless abounded imprudences and great irregularities; *viz.* the church at Corinth. There is scarcely any church more celebrated in the New Testament for being blessed with large measures of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary influences, in convincing and converting sinners, and also in his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; yet what manifold imprudences, great and sinful irregularities, and strange confusion did they run into, at the Lord's supper, and in the exercise of church discipline! To which may be added, their indecent manner of attending other parts of public worship,

their jarring and contention about their teachers, and even the exercise of their extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking with tongues, and the like, wherein they spake and acted by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God.

And if we see great imprudences, and even sinful irregularities, in some who are great instruments to carry on the work, it will not prove it not to be the work of God. The apostle Peter himself, who was a great, eminently holy, and inspired apostle--and one of the chief instruments of setting up the christian church in the world--when he was actually engaged in this work, was guilty of a great and sinful error in his conduct; of which the apostle Paul speaks, Gal. ii. 11-13. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed; for before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch, that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." If a great pillar of the christian church--one of the chief 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 if other lesser instruments, who have not that extraordinary conduct of the divine Spirit he had, should be guilty of many irregularities?

And in particular, it is no evidence that a work is not of God, if many who are either the subjects or the instrument of it, are guilty of too great forwardness to censure others as unconverted. For this may be through mistakes they have embraced concerning the marks by which they are to judge of the hypocrisy and carnality of others; or from not duly apprehending the latitude the Spirit of God uses in the methods of his operations; or, from want of making due allowance for that infirmity and corruption that may be left in the hearts of the saints; as well as through want of a due sense of their own blindness and weakness, and remaining corruption, whereby spiritual pride may have a secret vent this way, under some disguise, and not be discovered.--If we allow that truly pious men may have a great deal of remaining blindness and corruption, and may be liable to mistakes about the marks of hypocrisy, as undoubtedly all will allow, then it is not unaccountable that they should sometimes run into such errors as these. It is as easy, and upon some accounts more easy to be accounted for, why the remaining corruption of good men should sometimes have an unobserved vent this way, than most other ways; and without doubt(however lamentable) many holy men have erred in this way.

Lukewarmness in religion is abominable, and zeal an excellent grace; yet above all other christian virtues, this needs to be strictly watched and searched; for it is that with which corruption, and particularly pride and human passion, is exceedingly apt to mix unobserved. And it is observable, that there never was a time of great reformation, to cause a revival of zeal in the church of God, but that it has been attended, in some notable instances, with irregularity, and a running out some way or other into an undue severity. Thus in the apostles' days, a great deal of zeal was spent about unclean meats, with heat of spirit in Christians one against another, both parties condemning and censuring one another, as not true Christians; when the apostle had charity for both, as influenced by a spirit of real piety: "he that eats," says he, "to the Lord he eats, and giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." So in the church of Corinth, they had got into a way of extolling some ministers, and censuring others, and were puffed up one against another: but yet these things were no sign that the work then so wonderfully carried on, was not the work of God. And after this, when religion was still greatly flourishing in the world, and a spirit of eminent holiness and zeal prevailed in the christian church, the zeal of Christians ran out into a very improper and undue severity, in the exercise of church discipline towards delinquents. In some cases they would by no means admit them into their charity and communion though they appeared never so humble and penitent. And in the days of Constantine the Great, the zeal of Christians against heathenism ran out into a degree of persecution. So in that glorious revival of religion, at the reformation, zeal in many instances appeared in a very improper severity, and even a degree of persecution; yea, in some of the most eminent reformers; as in the great Calvin in particular. And

many in those days of the flourishing of vital religion, were guilty of severely censuring others that differed from then in opinion in some points of divinity.

VII. Nor are many errors in judgment, and some delusions of Satan intermixed with the work, any argument that the work in general is not of the Spirit of God.

However great a spiritual influence may be, it is not to be expected that the Spirit of God should be given now in the same manner as to the apostles, infallibly to guide them in points of christian doctrine, so that what they taught might be relied on as a rule to the christian church. And if many delusions of Satan appear, at the same time that a great religious concern prevails, it is not an argument that the work in general is not the work of God, any more than it was an argument in Egypt, that there were no true miracles wrought there, by the hand of God, because Jannes and Jambres wrought false miracles at the same time by the hand of the devil. Yea, the same persons may be the subjects of much of the influences of the Spirit of God, and yet in some things be led away by the delusions of Satan, and this be no more of paradox than many other things that are true of real saints, in the present state, where grace dwells with so much corruption, and the new man and the old man subsist together in the same person; and the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil remain for a while together in the same heart. Many godly persons have undoubtedly in this and other ages, exposed themselves to woeful delusions, by an aptness to lay too much weight on impulses and impressions, as if they were immediate revelations from God, to signify something future, or to direct them where to go, and what to do.

VIII. If some, who were thought to be wrought upon, fall away into gross errors, or scandalous practices, it is no argument that the work in general is not the work of the Spirit of God.

That there are some counterfeits, is no argument that nothing is true: such things are always expected in a time of reformation. If we look into church history, we shall find no instance of any great revival of religion, but what has been attended with many such things. Instances of this nature in the apostles' days were innumerable; some fell away into gross heresies, others into vile practices, though they seemed to be the subjects of a work of the Spirit--and were accepted for a while amongst those that were truly so, as their brethren and companions--and were not suspected till they went out from them. And some of these were teachers and officers--and eminent persons in the christian church--whom God had endowed with miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; as appears by the beginning of the 6th chapter of the Hebrews. An instance of these was Judas, who was one of the twelve apostles, and had long been constantly united to, and intimately conversant with, a company of truly experienced disciples, without being discovered or suspected, till he discovered himself by his scandalous practice. He had been treated by Jesus himself, in all external things, as if he had truly been a disciple, even investing him with the character of apostle, sending him forth to preach the gospel, and enduing him with miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For though Christ knew him, yet he did not then clothe himself with the character of omniscient Judge, and searcher of hearts, but acted the part of a minister of the visible church; (for he was his Father's minister;) and therefore rejected him not, till he had discovered himself by his scandalous practice; thereby giving an example to guides and rulers of the visible church, not to take it upon them to act the part of searcher of hearts, but to be influenced in their administrations by what is visible and open.--There were some instances then of such apostates, as were esteemed eminently full of the grace of God's Spirit. An instance of this nature probably was Nicolas, one of the seven deacons, who was looked upon by the Christians in Jerusalem, in the time of that extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit, as a man full of the Holy Ghost, and was chosen out of the multitude of Christians to that office, for that reason; as you may see in Acts vi. 3, 5. Yet he afterwards fell away and became the head of a sect of vile heretics, of gross practices, called from his name the sect of the Nicolaitans, Rev. ii. 6, and 15.

So in the time of the reformation from popery, how great was the number of those who for a while seemed to join with the reformers, yet fell away into the grossest and most absurd errors, and abominable practices. And it is particularly observable, that in times of great pouring out of the Spirit to revive religion in the world, a number of those who for a while seemed to partake in it, have fallen off into whimsical and extravagant errors, and gross enthusiasm, boasting of high degrees of spirituality and perfection, censuring and condemning others as carnal. Thus it was with the Gnostics in the apostles' times; and thus it was with several sects at the reformation, as Anthony Burgess observes in his book called *Spiritual Refinings*, Part I. Sermon. 23. P. 132. "The first worthy reformers, and glorious instruments of God, found a bitter conflict herein, so that they were exercised not only with formalists, and traditionary papists on the one side, but men that pretended themselves to be more enlightened than the reformers were, on the other side: hence they called those that did adhere to the Scripture, and would try revelations by it, Literists and Vowelists, as men acquainted with the words and vowels of the Scripture, having nothing of the Spirit of God: and wheresoever in any town the true doctrine of the gospel brake forth to the displacing of popery, presently such opinions arose, like tares that came up among the good wheat; whereby great divisions were raised, and the reformation made abominable and odious to the world; as if that had been the sun to give heat and warmth to those worms and serpents to crawl out of the ground. Hence they inveighed against Luther, and said he had only promulgated a carnal gospel."--Some of the leaders of those wild enthusiasts had been for a while highly esteemed by the first reformers, and peculiarly dear to them.--Thus also in England, at the time when vital religion much prevailed in the days of King Charles I, the interregnum, and Oliver Cromwell, such things as these abounded. And so in New England, in her purest days, when vital piety flourished, such kind of things as these broke out. Therefore the devil's sowing such tares is no proof that a true work of the Spirit of God is not gloriously carried on.

IX. It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it seems to be promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness.

If there be really a hell of such dreadful and never-ending torments, as is generally supposed, of which multitudes are in great danger--and into which the greater part of men in christian countries do actually from generation to generation fall, for want of a sense of its terribleness, and so for want of taking due care to avoid it--then why is it not proper for those who have the care of souls to take great pains to make men sensible of it? Why should they not be told as much of the truth as can be? If I am in danger of going to hell, I should be glad to know as much as possibly I can of the dreadfulness of it. If I am very prone to neglect due care to avoid it, he does me the best kindness, who does most to represent to me the truth of the case, that sets forth my misery and danger in the liveliest manner.

I appeal to every one, whether this is not the very course they would take in case of exposedness to any great temporal calamity? If any of you who are heads of families saw one of your children in a house all on fire, and in imminent danger of being soon consumed in the flames, yet seemed to be very insensible of its danger, and neglected to escape after you had often called to it--would you go on to speak to it only in a cold and indifferent manner? Would not you cry aloud, and call earnestly to it, and represent the danger it was in, and its own folly in delaying, in the most lively manner of which you was capable? If you should continue to speak to it only in a cold manner, as you are wont to do in ordinary conversation about indifferent matters, would not those about you begin to think you were bereft of reason yourself? This is not the way of mankind in temporal affairs of great moment, that require earnest heed and great haste, and about which they are greatly concerned. They are not wont to speak to other of their danger, and warn them but a little or in a cold and indifferent manner. Nature teaches men otherwise. If we who have the care of souls, knew what hell was, had seen the state of the damned, or by any other means had become sensible how dreadful their case was--and at the same time knew that the greater part of men went thither, and saw our hearers not sensible of their danger--it would be morally

impossible for us to avoid most earnestly setting before them the dreadfulness of that misery, and their great exposedness to it, and even to cry aloud to them.

When ministers preach of 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. For actions, as I observed before, have a language as well as words. If a preacher's words represent the sinner's state as infinitely dreadful, while his behaviour and manner of speaking contradict it--showing that the preacher does not think so--he defeats his own purpose; for the language of his actions, in such a case, is much more effectual than the bare signification of his words. Not that I think that the law only should be preached: ministers may preach other things too little. The gospel is to be preached as well as the law, and the law is to be preached only to make way for the gospel, and in order that it may be preached more effectually. The main work of ministers is to preach the gospel: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." So that a minister would miss it very much if he should insist so much on the terrors of the law, as to forget his Lord, and neglect to preach the gospel; but yet the law is very much to be insisted on, and the preaching of the gospel is like to be in vain without it.

And certainly such earnestness and affection in speaking is beautiful, as becomes the nature and importance of the subject. Not but that there may be such a thing as an indecent boisterousness in a preacher, something besides what naturally arises from the nature of his subject, and in which the matter and manner do not well agree together. Some talk of it as an unreasonable thing to fright persons to heaven; but I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavour to fright persons away from hell. They stand upon its brink, and are just ready to fall into it, and are senseless of their danger. Is it not a reasonable thing to fright a person out of a house on fire? The word *fright* is commonly used for sudden, causeless fear, or groundless surprise; but surely a just fear, for which there is good reason, is not to be spoken against under any such name.

SECT. II

What are distinguishing scripture evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.

HAVING shown, in some instances, what are not evidences that a work wrought among a people, is not a work of the Spirit of God, I now proceed, in the second place, as was proposed, to show positively, what are the sure, distinguishing scripture evidences and marks of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see among a people, without danger of being misled.--And in this, as I said before, I shall confine myself wholly to those marks which are given us by the apostle in the chapter wherein is my text, where this matter is particularly handled, and more plainly and fully than any where else in the Bible. And in speaking to these marks, I shall take them in the order in which I find them in the chapter.

I. When the operation is such as to raise their esteem of that Jesus who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God.

This sign the apostle gives us in the 2d and 3d verses, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; and every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." This implies a confessing not only that there was such a person who appeared in Palestine, and did and suffered those things that are recorded of him, but that he was Christ, *i.e.* the Son of God, anointed to be Lord and Saviour, as the name Jesus Christ implies. That thus much is implied in the apostle's meaning, is confirmed by the 15th verse, where the apostle is still on the same subject of signs

of the true Spirit; “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” And it is to be observed that the word *confess*, as it is often used in the New Testament, signifies more than merely *allowing*: it implies an establishing and confirming of a thing by testimony, and declaring it with manifestation of esteem and affection; so Matt. x. 32. “Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I *confess* also before my Father which is in heaven.” Rom. xv. 9. “I will *confess* to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.” And Phil. ii. 11. “That every tongue shall *confess* that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” And that this is the force of the expression, as the apostle John uses it in the place, is confirmed in the next chapter, ver. 1. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” And by that parallel place of the apostle Paul, where we have the same rule given to distinguish the true Spirit from all counterfeits, 1 Cor. xii. 3. “Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; (or will show an ill or mean esteem of him;) and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

So that if the spirit that is at work among a people is plainly observed to work so as to convince them of Christ, and lead them to him--to confirm their minds in the belief of the history of Christ as he appeared in the flesh--and that he is the Son of God, and was sent of God to save sinners; that he is the only Saviour, and that they stand in great need of him; and if he seems to beget in them higher and more honourable thoughts of him than they used to have, and to incline their affections more to him; it is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit; however incapable we may be to determine, whether that conviction and affection be in that manner, or to that degree, as to be saving or not.

But the words of the apostle are remarkable; the person to whom the Spirit gives testimony, and for whom he raises their esteem, must be that Jesus who appeared in the flesh, and not another Christ in his stead; nor any mystical fantastical Christ; such as the light within. This the spirit of Quakers extols, while it diminishes their esteem of and dependence upon an outward Christ--or Jesus as he came in the flesh--and leads them off from him; but the spirit that gives testimony for that Jesus, and leads to him, can be no other than the Spirit of God.

The devil has the most bitter and implacable enmity against that person, especially in his character of the Saviour of men; he mortally hates the story and doctrine of his redemption; he never would go about to beget in men more honourable thoughts of him, and lay greater weight on his instructions and commands. The Spirit that inclines men's hearts to the seed of the woman, is not the spirit of the serpent that has such an irreconcilable enmity against him. He that heightens men's esteem of the glorious Michael, that prince of angels, is not the spirit of the dragon that is at war with him.

II. When the spirit that is at work operates against the interests of Satan's kingdom, which lies in encouraging and establishing sin, and cherishing men's worldly lusts; this is a sure sign that it is a true, and not a false spirit.

This sign we have given us in the 4th and 5th verses. “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” Here is a plain antithesis: it is evident that the apostle is still comparing those that are influenced by the two opposite kinds of spirits, the true and the false, and showing the difference; the one is of God, and overcomes the spirit of the world; the other is of the world, and speaks and savours of the things of the world. The spirit of the devil is here called, “he that is in the world.” Christ says, “My kingdom is not of this world.” But 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 by his own words, in the 2d chapter of this epistle, 15th and 16th verses. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,

and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” So that by the world the apostle evidently means every thing that appertains to the interest of sin, and comprehends all the corruptions and lusts of men, and all those acts and objects by which they are gratified.

So that we may safely determine, from what the apostle says, that the spirit that is at work amongst a people, after such a manner, as to lessen men’s esteem of the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, and to take off their hearts from an eager pursuit after these things; and to engage them in a deep concern about a future state and eternal happiness which the gospel reveals--and puts them upon earnestly seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and the spirit that convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, the guilt it brings, and the misery to which it exposes; must needs be the Spirit of God.

It is not to be supposed that Satan would convince men of sin, and awaken the conscience; it can no way serve his end, to make that candle of the Lord shine the brighter, and to open the mouth of that vicegerent of God in the soul. It is for his interest, whatever he does, to lull conscience asleep, and keep it quiet. To have that, with its eyes and mouth open in the soul, will tend to clog and hinder all his designs of darkness, and evermore to disturb his affairs, to cross his interest, and disquiet him, so that he can manage nothing to his mind without molestation. Would the devil, when he is about to establish men in sin, take such a course, in the first place, to enlighten and awaken the conscience to see the dreadfulness of sin, and make them exceedingly afraid of it, and sensible of their misery by reason of their past sins, and their great need of deliverance from their guilt? Would he make them more careful, inquisitive, and watchful to discern what is sinful; and to avoid future sins; and so more afraid of the devil’s temptations, and more careful to guard against them? What do those men do with their reason, that suppose that the Spirit that operates thus, is the spirit of the devil?

Possibly some may say, that the devil may even awaken men’s consciences to deceive them, and make them think they have been the subjects of a saving work of the Spirit of God, while they are indeed still in the gall of bitterness. But to this it may be replied, that the man who has an awakened conscience, is the least likely to be deceived of any man in the world; it is the drowsy, insensible, stupid conscience that is most easily blinded. The more sensible conscience is in a diseased soul, the less easily is it quieted without a real healing. The more sensible conscience is made of the dreadfulness of sin, and of the greatness of a man’s own guilt, the less likely is he to rest in his own righteousness, or to be pacified with nothing but shadows. A man that has been thoroughly terrified with a sense of his own danger and misery, is not easily flattered and made to believe himself safe, without any good grounds. To awaken conscience, and convince it of the evil of sin, cannot tend to establish it, but certainly tends to make way for sin and Satan’s being cut out. Therefore this is a good argument that the Spirit that operates thus, cannot be the spirit of the devil; except we suppose that Christ knew not how to argue, who told the Pharisees--who supposed that the Spirit by which he wrought, was the spirit of the devil--*that Satan would not cast out Satan*, Matt. xii. 25, 26.--And therefore, if we see persons made sensible of the dreadful nature of sin, and of the displeasure of God against it; of their own miserable condition as they are in themselves, by reason of sin, and earnestly concerned for their eternal salvation--and sensible of their need of God’s pity and help, and engaged to seek it in the use of the means that God has appointed--we may certainly conclude that it is from the Spirit of God, whatever effects this concern has on their bodies; though it cause them to cry out aloud, or to shriek, or to faint; or, though it throw them into convulsions, or whatever other way the blood and spirits are moved.

The influence of the Spirit of God is yet more abundantly manifest, if persons have their hearts *drawn off* from the world, and weaned from the objects of their worldly lusts, and taken off from worldly pursuits, by the sense they have of the excellency of divine things, and the affection they have to those spiritual enjoyments of another world, that are promised in the gospel.

III. The spirit that operates in such a manner, as to cause in men a greater regard to the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, is certainly the Spirit of God.

This rule the apostle gives us in the 6th verse: "We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." *We are of God*; that is, "We the apostles are sent forth of God, and appointed by him to teach the world, and to deliver those doctrines and instructions, which are to be their rule; *he that knoweth God, heareth us*," &c.--The apostle's argument here equally reaches all that in the same sense are *of God*; that is, all those that God has appointed and inspired to deliver to his church its rule of faith and practice; all the prophets and apostles, whose doctrine God has made the foundation on which he has built his church, as in Eph. ii. 20. in a word, all the penmen of the Holy Scriptures. The devil never would attempt to beget in persons a regard to that divine word which God has given to be the great and standing rule for the direction of his church in all religious matters, and all concerns of their souls, in all ages. A spirit of delusion will not incline persons to seek direction at 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 to discover their delusions. Isa. viii. 19, 20. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The devil does not say the same as Abraham did, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them;" nor the same that the voice from heaven did concerning Christ, "Hear ye him." Would the spirit of error, in order to deceive men, beget in them a high opinion of the infallible rule, and incline them to think much of it, and be very conversant with it? Would the prince of darkness, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness, lead men to the sun? The devil has ever shown a mortal spite and hatred towards that holy book the Bible: he has done all in his power to extinguish that light; and to draw men off from it: he knows it to be that light by which his kingdom of darkness is to be overthrown. He has had for many ages experience of its power to defeat his purposes, and baffle his designs: it is his constant plague. It is the main weapon which Michael uses in his war with him: it is the sword of the Spirit, that pierces him and conquers him. It is that great and strong sword, with which God punishes Leviathan, that crooked serpent. It is that sharp sword that we read of, Rev. xix. 15. That proceeds out of the mouth of him that sat on the horse, with which he smites his enemies. Every text is a dart to torment the old serpent. He has felt the stinging smart thousands of times; therefore he is engaged against the Bible, and hates every word in it: and we may be sure that he never will attempt to raise persons' esteem of it, or affection to it. And accordingly we see it common in enthusiasts, that they depreciate this written rule, and set up the light within or some other rule above it.

IV. Another rule to judge of spirits may be drawn from those compellations given to the opposite spirits, in the last words of the 6th verse, "The spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

These words exhibit the two opposite characters of the Spirit of God, and other spirits that counterfeit his operations. And therefore, if by observing the manner of the operation of a spirit that is at work among a people, we see that it operates as a spirit of truth, leading persons to truth, convincing them of those things that are true, we may safely determine that it is a right and true spirit. For instance, if we observe that the spirit at work makes men more sensible than they used to be, that there is a God, and that he is a great and sin-hating God; 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, that they are exceeding sinful by nature and practice; that they are helpless in themselves; and confirms them in other things that are agreeable to some sound doctrine; the spirit that works thus operates as a spirit of truth; he represents things as they truly are. He brings men to the light; for whatever makes truth manifest is light; as the apostle Paul observes, Eph. v. 13. "But all things that are reproved (or discovered, as it is in the margin) are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." And therefore we may conclude, that it is not the spirit of darkness that doth thus discover

and make manifest the truth. Christ tells us that Satan is a liar, and the father of lies; and his kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. It is upheld and promoted only by darkness and error. Satan has all his power of dominion by darkness. Hence we read of the power of darkness. Luke xxii. 53. And Col. i. 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, by convincing us of the truth, doth us a kindness. If I am brought to a sight of truth, and am made sensible of things as they really are, my duty is immediately to thank God for it, without standing first to inquire by what means I have such a benefit.

V. If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and man, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God.

This sign the apostle insists upon from the 6th verse to the end of the chapter. “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love,” &c. Here it is evident, that the apostle is still comparing those two sorts of persons that are influenced by the opposite kinds of spirits; and mentions love as a mark by which we may know who has the true spirit: but this is especially evident by the 12th and 13th verses. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us: hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” In these verses love is spoken of as if it were that wherein the very nature of the Holy Spirit consisted; or, as if *divine love* dwelling in us, and the *Spirit of God* dwelling in us, were the same thing; as it is also in the last two verses of the foregoing chapter, and in the 16th verse of this chapter. Therefore this last mark which the apostle gives of the true Spirit he seems to speak of as the most eminent: and so insists much more largely upon it, than upon all the rest; and speaks expressly of both love to God and men; of *love to men* in the 7th, 11th, and 12th verses; and of *love to God*, in the 17th, 18th, and 19th verses; and of both together, in the last two verses; and of love to men, as arising from love to God, in these last two verses.

Therefore, when the spirit that is at work amongst the people, tends this way, and brings many of them to high and exalting thoughts of the Divine Being, and his glorious perfections; and works in them an admiring, delightful sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ; representing him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and makes him precious to the soul; winning and drawing the heart with those motives and incitements to love, of which the apostle speaks in that passage of Scripture we are upon, *viz.* the wonderful, free love of God in giving his only-begotten Son to die for us, and the wonderful dying love of Christ to us, who had no love to him, but were his enemies; must needs be the Spirit of God, as ver. 9, 10. “In this was manifested the love of God towards 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 ver. 16. “And we have known, and believed, the love that God hath to us.” And ver. 19. “We love him because he first loved us.” The spirit that excites to love on these motives, and makes the attributes of God as revealed in the gospel, and manifested in Christ, delightful objects of contemplation; and makes the soul to long after God and Christ--after their presence and communion, acquaintance with them, and conformity to them--and to live so as to please and honour them; the spirit that quells contentions among men, and gives a spirit of peace and good will, excites to acts of outward kindness, and earnest desires of the salvation of souls--and causes a delight in those that appear as the children God, and followers of Christ; I say, when a spirit operates after this manner among a people, there is the highest kind of evidence of the influence of a true and divine spirit.

Indeed there is a counterfeit love, that often appears among those who are led by a spirit of delusion. There is commonly in the wildest enthusiasts, a kind of union and affection, arising from self-love, occasioned by their agreeing in those things wherein they greatly differ from all others, and from which they are objects of the ridicule of all the rest of mankind. This naturally will cause them so much the more to prize those peculiarities

that make them the objects of others' contempt. Thus the ancient Gnostics, and the wild fanatics that appeared at the beginning of the reformation, boasted of their great love one to another; one sect of them, in particular, calling themselves the *family of love*. But this is quite another thing, than that christian love I have just described: it is only the working of a natural self-love, and no true benevolence, any more than the union and friendship which may be among a company of pirates, that are at war with all the rest of the world. There is enough said in this passage of the nature of a truly christian love, thoroughly to distinguish it from all such counterfeits. It is love that arises from apprehension of the wonderful riches of the free grace and sovereignty of God's love to us, in Christ Jesus; being attended with a sense of our own utter unworthiness, as in ourselves the enemies and haters of God and Christ, and with a renunciation of all our own excellency and righteousness. See ver. 9, 10, 11, and 19. The surest character of true divine supernatural love--distinguishing it from counterfeits that arise from a natural self-love--is, that the christian virtue of *humility* shines in it; that which above all others renounces, abases, and annihilates what we term *self*. Christian love, or true charity, is an humble love. 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked." When therefore we see love in persons attended with a sense of their own littleness, vileness, weakness, and utter insufficiency; and so with self-diffidence, self-emptiness, self-renunciation, and poverty of spirit; these are the manifest tokens of the Spirit of God. He that thus dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him. What the apostle speaks of as a great evidence of the true Spirit, is God's love or Christ's love; as ver. 12.--"his love is perfected in us." What kind of love that is, we may see best in what appeared in Christ's example. The love that appeared in that Lamb of God, was not only a love to friends, but to enemies, and a love attended with a meek and humble spirit. "Learn of me," says he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart."--Love and humility are two things the most contrary to the spirit of the devil, of any thing in the world; for the character of that evil spirit, above all things, consists in pride and malice.

Thus I have spoken particularly to the several marks the apostle gives us of a work of the true Spirit. There are some of these things which the devil *would not* do if he could: thus he would not awaken the conscience, and make men sensible of their miserable state by reason of sin, and sensible of their great need of a Saviour; and he would not confirm men in the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners, or raise men's value and esteem of him: he would not beget in men's minds an opinion of the necessity, usefulness, and truth of the Holy Scriptures, or incline them to make much use of them; nor would he show men the truth, in things that concern their souls' interest; to undeceive them, and lead them out of darkness into light, and give them a view of things as they really are. And there are other things that the devil *neither can nor will* do; he will not give men a spirit of divine love, or christian humility and poverty of spirit; nor *could* he if he would. He cannot give those things he has not himself: these things are as contrary as possible to his nature. And therefore when there is an extraordinary influence or operation appearing on the minds of a people, if these things are found in it, we are safe in determining that it is the work of God, whatever other circumstances it may be attended with, whatever instruments are used, whatever methods are taken to promote it; whatever means a sovereign God, whose judgments are a great deep, employs to carry it on; and whatever motion there may be of the animal spirits, whatever effects may be wrought on men's bodies. These marks, that the apostle has given us, are sufficient to stand alone, and support themselves. They plainly show *the finger of God*, and are sufficient to outweigh a thousand such little objections, as many make from oddities, irregularities, errors in conduct, and the delusions and scandals of some professors.

But here some may *object* to the sufficiency of the marks given, what the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

To which I *answer*, that this can be no objection against the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true from the false spirit, in those false apostles and prophets, in whom the devil was transformed into an angel of

light, because it is principally with a view to them that the apostle gives these marks; as appears by the words of the text, “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God;” and this is the reason he gives, because many false prophets are gone out into the world: *viz.* “There are many gone out into the world who are the ministers of the devil, who transform themselves into the prophets of God, in whom the spirit of the devil is transformed into an angel of light; therefore try the spirits by these rules that I shall give you, that you may be able to distinguish the true spirit from the false, under such a crafty disguise.” Those *false prophets* the apostle *John* speaks of, are doubtless the same sort of men with those *false apostles*, and deceitful workers, that the apostle *Paul* speaks of, in whom the devil was transformed into an angel of light: and therefore we may be sure that these marks are especially adapted to distinguish between the true Spirit, and the devil transformed into an angel of light, because they are given especially for that end; that is the apostle’s declared purpose and design, to give marks by which the true Spirit may be distinguished from that sort of counterfeits.

And if we look over what is said about these false prophets, and false apostles, (as there is much said about them in the New Testament,) and take notice in what manner the devil was transformed into an angel of light in them, we shall not find any thing that in the least injures the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true Spirit from such counterfeits. The devil transformed himself into an angel of light, as there was in them a show, and great boast, of extraordinary knowledge in divine things; Col. ii. 8. 1. Tim. i. 6,7. and chap. vi. 3--5. 2 Tim. ii. 14-18. Tit. i. 10, 16. Hence their followers called themselves *Gnostics*, from their great pretended knowledge: and the devil in them mimicked the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, in visions, revelations, prophecies, miracles, &c. Hence they are called false apostles, and false prophets: see Matt. xxiv. 24. Again, there was a false show of, and lying pretensions to, great holiness and devotion in words: Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Ephes. iv. 14. Hence they are called deceitful workers, and wells and clouds without water. 2 Cor. xi. 13. 2 Pet. ii. 17. Jude 12. There was also in them a show of extraordinary piety and righteousness in their superstitious worship: Col. ii. 16-23. So they had a false, proud, and bitter zeal: Gal. iv. 17, 18. 1 Tim. i. 6. and chap. vi. 4, 5. And likewise a false show of humility, in affecting an extraordinary outward meanness and dejection, when indeed they were “vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind:” and made a righteousness of their humility, and were exceedingly lifted up with their eminent piety: Col. ii. 18, 23. But how do such things as these in the least injure those things that have been mentioned as the distinguishing evidences of the true Spirit?--Besides such vain shows which may be from the devil, there are common influences of the Spirit, which are often mistaken for saving grace; but these are out of the question, because though they are not saving, yet are the work of the true Spirit.

Having thus fulfilled what I at first proposed, in considering what are the certain, distinguishing marks, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any work that falls under our observation, whether it be the work of the Spirit of God or no; I now proceed to the APPLICATION.

SECT. III.

Practical inferences.

I. From what has been said, I will venture to draw this inference, *viz.* *That the extraordinary influence that has lately appeared, causing an uncommon concern and engagedness of mind about the things of religion, is undoubtedly, in the general, from the Spirit of God.*

There are but two things that need to be known in order to such a work’s being judged of, *viz.* *Facts* and *rules*. The *rules* of the word of God we have had laid before us; and as to *facts*, there are but two ways that we can come at them, so as to be in a capacity to compare them with the rules, either by our own observation, or by information from others who have had opportunity to observe them.

As to this work, there are many things concerning it that are notorious, and which, unless the apostle John was out in his rules, are sufficient to determine it to be in general the work of God. The Spirit that is at work, takes off persons' minds from the vanities of the world, and engages them in a deep concern about eternal happiness, and puts them upon earnestly seeking their salvation, and convinces them of the dreadfulfulness of sin, and of their own guilty and miserable state as they are by nature. It awakens men's consciences, and makes them sensible of the dreadfulfulness of God's anger, and causes in them a great desire and earnest care and endeavour to obtain his favour. It puts them upon a more diligent improvement of the means of grace which God has appointed; accompanied with a greater regard to the word of God, a desire of hearing and reading it, and of being more conversant with it than they used to be. And it is notoriously manifest, that the spirit that is at work, in general, operates as a spirit of truth, making persons more sensible of what is really true in those things that concern their eternal salvation: as, that they must die, and 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 Saviour. It makes persons more sensible of the value of Jesus who was crucified, and their need of him; and that it puts them upon earnestly seeking an interest in him. It cannot be but that these things should be apparent to people in general through the land; for these things are not done in a corner; the work has not been confined to a few towns, in some remoter parts, but has been carried on in many places all over the land, and in most of the principal, the populous, and public places in it. Christ in this respect has wrought amongst us, in the same manner that he wrought his miracles in Judea. It has now been continued for a considerable time; so that there has been a great opportunity to observe the manner of the work. And all such as have been very conversant with the subjects of it, see a great deal more, that, by the rules of the apostle, does clearly and certainly show it to be the work of God.

And here I would observe, that the nature and tendency of a spirit that is at work, may be determined with much greater certainty, and less danger of being imposed upon, when it is observed in a great multitude of people of all sorts, and in various places, than when it is only seen in a few, in some particular place, that have been much conversant one with another. A few particular persons may agree to put a cheat upon others, by a false pretence, and professing things of which they never were conscious. But when the work is spread over great parts of a country, in places distant from one another, among people of all sorts and of all ages, and in multitudes possessed of a sound mind, good understanding, and known integrity; there would be the greatest absurdity in supposing, from all the observation that can be made by all that is heard from and seen in them--for many months together, and by those who are most intimate with them in these affairs, and have long been acquainted with them--that yet it cannot be determined what kind of influence the operation they are under, has upon people's minds, can it not be determined whether it tends to awaken their consciences, or to stupify them; whether it inclines them more to seek their salvation, or neglect it; whether it seems to confirm them in a belief of the Scriptures, or to lead them to deism; whether it makes them have more regard for the great truths of religion, or less?

And here it is to be observed, that for persons to profess that they are so convinced of certain divine truths, as to esteem and love them in a *saving manner*; and for them to profess, that they are *more convinced* or confirmed in the truth of them, than they used to be, and find that they have a greater regard to them than they had before, are two very different things. Persons of honesty and common sense, have much greater right to demand credit to be given to the latter profession, than to the former. Indeed in the former, it is less likely that a people in general should be deceived, than some particular persons. But whether persons' convictions, and the alteration in their dispositions and affections, be in a degree and manner that is saving, is beside the present question. If there be such effects on people's judgments, dispositions, and affections, as have been spoken of, whether they be in a degree and manner that is saving or no, it is nevertheless a sign of the influence of the Spirit of God. Scripture rules serve to distinguish the common influences of the Spirit of God, as well as those that are saving, from the influence of other causes.

And as, by the providence of God, I have for some months past been much amongst those who have been the subjects of the work in question; and particularly, have been in the way of seeing and observing those extraordinary things with which many persons have been offended;--such as persons' crying out aloud, shrieking, being put into great agonies of body, &c.--and have seen the manner and issue of such operations, and the fruits of them, for several months together; many of them being persons with whom I have been intimately acquainted in soul concerns, before and since; so I look upon myself called on this occasion to give my testimony, that--so far as the nature and tendency of such a work is capable of falling under the observation of a by-stander, to whom those that have been the subjects of it have endeavoured to open their hearts, or can be come at by diligent and particular inquiry--this work has all those marks that have been pointed out. And this has been the case in very many instances, in *every article*; and in many others, all those marks have appeared in a very *great degree*.

The subjects of these uncommon appearances, have been of two sorts; either those who have been in great distress from an apprehension of their sin and misery; or those who have been overcome with a sweet sense of the greatness, wonderfulness, and excellency of divine things. Of the multitude of those of the former sort, that I have had opportunity to observe, there have been very few, but their distress has arisen apparently from real proper conviction, and being in a degree sensible of that which was the truth. And though I do not suppose, when such things were observed to be common, that persons have laid themselves under those violent restraints to avoid outward manifestations of their distress, that perhaps they otherwise would have done; yet there have been very few in whom there has been any appearance of feigning or affecting such manifestations, and very many for whom it would have been undoubtedly utterly impossible for them to avoid them. Generally, in these agonies they have appeared to be in the perfect exercise of their reason; and those of them who could speak, have been well able to give an account of the circumstances of their mind, and the cause of their distress, at the time, and were able to remember, and give an account of it afterwards. I have known a very few instances of those, who, in their great extremity, have for a short space been deprived, in some measure, of the use of reason; but among the many hundreds, and it may be thousands, that have lately been brought to such agonies, I never yet knew one lastingly deprived of their reason. In some that I have known, melancholy has evidently been mixed; and when it is so, the difference is very apparent; their distresses are of another kind, and operate quite after another manner, than when their distress is from mere conviction. It is not truth only that distresses them, but many vain shadows and notions that will not give place either to Scripture or reason. Some in their great distress have not been well able to give an account of themselves, or to declare the sense they have of things, or to explain the manner and cause of their trouble to others, that yet I have had no reason to think were not under proper convictions, and in whom there has been manifested a good issue. But this will not be at all wondered at, by those who have had much to do with souls under spiritual difficulties: some things of which they are sensible, are altogether new to them; their ideas and inward sensations are new, and what they therefore know not how to express in words. Some who, on first inquiry, said they knew not what was the matter with them, have on being particularly examined and interrogated, been able to represent their case, though of themselves they could not find expressions and forms of speech to do it.

Some suppose, that terrors producing such effects are only a fright. But certainly there ought to be a distinction made between a very great fear, or extreme distress arising from an apprehension of some dreadful truth--a cause fully proportionable to such an effect--and a needless, causeless fright. The latter is of two kinds; either, first, when persons are terrified with that which is not the truth; (of which I have seen very few instances unless in case of melancholy;) or, secondly, when they are in a fright from some terrible outward appearance and noise, and a general notion thence arising. These apprehend, that there is something or other terrible, they know not what; without having in their minds any particular truth whatever. Of such a kind of fright I have seen very little appearance, among either old or young.

Those who are in such extremity, commonly express a great sense of their exceeding wickedness, the multitude and aggravations of their actual sins; their dreadful pollution, enmity, and perverseness; their obstinacy and hardness of heart; a sense of their great guilt in the sight of God; and the dreadfulness of the punishment due to sin. Very often they have a lively idea of the horrible pit of eternal misery; and at the same time it appears to them that the great God who has them in his hands, is exceedingly angry, and his wrath appears amazingly terrible to them. God appears to them so much provoked, and his great wrath so increased; that they are apprehensive of great danger, and that he will not bear with them any longer; but will now forthwith cut them off, and send them down to the dreadful pit they have in view; at the same time seeing no refuge. They see more and more of the vanity of every thing they use to trust to, and with which they flattered themselves, till they are brought wholly to despair in all, and to see that they are 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 of their fully deserving that wrath, and the destruction which was then before their eyes. They feared every moment, that it would be executed upon them; they have been greatly convinced that this would be altogether just, and that God is indeed absolutely sovereign. Very often, some text of Scripture expressing God's sovereignty, has been set home upon their minds, whereby they have been calmed. They have been brought, as it were, to lie at God's feet; and after great agonies, a little before light has arisen, they have been composed and quiet, in submission to a just and sovereign God; but their bodily strength much spent. Sometimes their lives, to appearance, were almost gone; and then light has appeared, and a glorious Redeemer, with his wonderful, all-sufficient grace, has been represented to them often, in some sweet invitation of Scripture. Sometimes the light comes in suddenly, sometimes more gradually, filling their souls with love, admiration, joy, and self-abasement: drawing forth their hearts after the excellent lovely Redeemer, and longings to lie in the dust before him; and that others might behold, embrace, and be delivered by him. They had longings to live to his glory; but were sensible that they can do nothing of themselves, appearing vile in their own eyes, and having much jealousy over their own hearts. And all the appearances of a real change of heart have followed; and grace has acted, from time to time, after the same manner that is used to act in those that were converted formerly, with the like difficulties, temptations, buffetings, and comforts; excepting that in many, the light and comfort have been in higher degrees than ordinary. Many very young children have been thus wrought upon. There have been some instances very much like those (Mark i. 26. and chap. ix. 26.) of whom we read, that "when the devil had cried with a loud voice, and rent them sore, he came out of them." And probably those instances were designed for a type of such things as these. Some have several turns of great agonies, before they are delivered; and others have been in such distress, which has passed off, and no deliverance at all has followed.

Some object against it as great confusion, when there is a number together in such circumstances making a noise; and say, God cannot be the author of it; because he is the God of order, not of confusion. But let it be considered, what is the proper notion of confusion, but the breaking that order of things, whereby they are properly disposed, and duly directed to their end, so that the order and due connexion of means being broken, they fail of their end. Now the conviction of sinners for their conversion is the obtaining of the end of religious means. Not but that I think the persons thus extraordinarily moved, should endeavour to refrain from such outward manifestations, what they well can, and should refrain to their utmost, at the time of their solemn worship. But if God is pleased to convince the consciences of persons, so that they cannot avoid great outward manifestations, even to interrupting and breaking off those public means they were attending, I do not think this is confusion, or an unhappy interruption, any more than if a company should meet on the field to pray for rain, and should be broken off from their exercise by a plentiful shower. Would to God that all the public assemblies in the land were broken off from their public exercises with such confusion as this the next sabbath day! We need not be sorry for breaking the order of means, by obtaining the end to which that order is directed. He who is going to fetch a treasure, need not be sorry that he is stopped, by meeting the treasure in the midst of his journey.

Besides those who are overcome with conviction and distress, I have seen many of late, who have had their bodily strength taken away with a sense of the glorious excellency of the Redeemer, and the wonders of his dying love; with a very uncommon sense of their own littleness and exceeding vileness attending it, with all expressions and appearances of the greatest abasement and abhorrence of themselves. Not only new converts, but many who were, as we hope, formerly converted, have had their love and joy attended with a flood of tears, and a great appearance of contrition and humiliation, especially for their having lived no more to God's glory since their conversion. These have had a far greater sight of their vileness, and the evil of their hearts, than ever they had; with an exceeding earnestness of desire to live better for the time to come, but attended with greater self-diffidence than ever: and many have been overcome with pity to 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 those marks which have been insisted on. So that if the apostle John knew how to give signs of a work of the true Spirit, this is such a work.

Providence has cast my lot in a place where the work of God has *formerly* been carried on. I had the happiness to be settled in that place two years with the venerable Stoddard; and was then acquainted with a number who, during that season, were wrought upon under his ministry. I have been intimately acquainted with the experiences of many others who were wrought upon under his ministry, before that period, in a manner agreeable to the doctrine of all orthodox divines. And of late, a work has been carried on there, with very much of uncommon operations; but it is evidently the same work that was carried on there, in different periods, though attended with some new circumstances. And certainly we must throw by all talk of conversion and christian experience; and not only so, but we must throw by our Bibles, and give up revealed religion; if this be not in general the work of God. Not that I suppose the degree of the Spirit's influence is to be determined by the degree of effect on men's bodies; or, that those are always the best experiences which have the greatest influence on the body.

And as to the imprudencies, irregularities, and mixture of delusion that has been observed; it is not at all to be wondered at, that a reformation, after a long-continued and almost universal deadness, should at first, when the revival is new, be attended with such things. In the first creation God did not make a complete world at once; but there was a great deal of imperfection, darkness, and mixture of chaos and confusion, after God first said, "Let there be light," before the whole stood forth in perfect form. When God at first began his great work for the deliverance of his people, after their long-continued bondage in Egypt, there were false wonders mixed with the true for a while; which hardened the unbelieving Egyptians, and made them to doubt of the divinity of the whole work. When the children of Israel first went to bring up the ark of God, after it had been neglected, and had been long absent, they sought not the Lord after the due order, 1 Chron. xv. 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 day-light first appears after a night of darkness, we must expect to have darkness mixt with light for a while, and not have perfect day and the sun risen at once. The fruits of the earth are first green before they are ripe, and come to their proper perfection gradually; and so, Christ tells us, is the kingdom of God. Mark iv. 26, 27, 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 knoweth not how: for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

The imprudences and errors that have attended this work, are the less to be wondered at, if it be considered, that chiefly young persons have been the subjects of it, who have less steadiness and experience, and being in the heat of youth, are much more ready to run to extremes. Satan will keep men secure as long as he can; but when he can do that no longer, he often endeavours to drive them to extremes, and so to dishonour God, and wound religion in that way. And doubtless it has been one occasion of much misconduct, that in many places,

people see plainly that their ministers have an ill opinion of the work; and therefore, with just reason, durst not apply themselves to them as their guides in it; and so are without guides.--No wonder then that when a people are as sheep without a shepherd, they wander out of the way. A people in such circumstances, stand in great and continual need of guides, and their guides stand in continual need of much more wisdom than they have of their own. And if a people have ministers that favour the work, and rejoice in it, yet it is not to be expected that either the people or ministers should know so well how to conduct themselves in such an extraordinary state of things--while it is new, and what they never had any experience of before, and time to see their tendency, consequences, and issue. The happy influence of experience is very manifest at this day, in the people among whom God has settled my abode. The work which has been carried on there this year, has been much purer than that which was wrought there six years before: it has seemed to be more purely spiritual; free from natural and corrupt mixtures, and any thing savouring of enthusiastic wildness and extravagance. It has wrought more by deep humiliation and abasement before God and men; and they have been much freer from imprudences and irregularities. And particularly there has been a remarkable difference in this respect, that whereas many before, in their comforts and rejoicings, did too much forget their distance from God, and were ready in their conversation together of the things of God, and of their own experiences, to talk with too much lightness; but now they seem to have no disposition that way, but rejoice with a more solemn, reverential, humble joy, as God directs. (Psal. ii. 11.) Not because the joy is not as great, and in many instances much greater. Many among us who were wrought upon in that former season, have now had much greater communications from heaven than they had then. Their rejoicing operates in another manner; it abases them, breaks their hearts, and brings them into the dust. When they speak of their joys, it is not with laughter, but a flood of tears. Thus those that laughed before, weep now, and yet by their united testimony, their joy is vastly purer and sweeter than that which before did more raise 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 dreadful is this place!" And like Moses, when God showed him his glory on the mount, when he made haste and "bowed himself unto the earth."

II. Let us all be hence warned, *by no means to oppose, or do any thing in the least to clog or hinder, the work; but, on the contrary, do our utmost to promote it.* Now Christ is come down from heaven in a remarkable and wonderful work of his Spirit, it becomes all his professed disciples to acknowledge him, and give him honour.

The example of the Jews in Christ's and the apostles' times, is enough to beget in those who do not acknowledge this work, a great jealousy of themselves, and to make them exceeding cautious of what they say or do. Christ then was in the world, and the world knew him not: he came to his own professing people, and his own received him not. That coming of Christ had been much spoken of in the prophecies of Scripture which they had in their hands, and it had been long expected; and yet because Christ came in a manner they did not expect, and which was not agreeable to their carnal reason, they would not own him. Nay, they opposed him, counted him a madman, and pronounced the spirit that he wrought by to be the spirit of the devil. They stood and wondered at the great things done, and knew not what to make of them; but yet they met with so many stumbling-blocks, that they finally could not acknowledge him. And when the Spirit of God came to be poured out so wonderfully in the apostles' days, they looked upon it as confusion and distraction. They were *astonished* by what they saw and heard, but not *convinced*. And especially was the work of God then rejected by those that were most conceited of their own understanding and knowledge, agreeable to Isa. xxix. 14. "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." And many who had been in reputation for religion and piety, had a great spite against the work, because they saw it tended to diminish their honour, and to reproach their formality and lukewarmness. Some, upon these accounts, maliciously and openly opposed and reproached the work of the Spirit of God, and called it the work of the devil, against inward conviction, and so were guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

There is another, a spiritual coming of Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, that is as much spoken of in scripture prophecy as that first coming, and which has long been expected by the church of God. We have reason to think, from what is said of this, that it will be, in many respects, parallel with the other. And certainly, that low state into which the visible church of God has lately been sunk is very parallel with the state of the Jewish church, when Christ came; and therefore no wonder at all, that when Christ comes, his work should appear a strange work to most; yea, it would be wonder if it should be otherwise. Whether the present work be the beginning of that great and frequently predicted coming of Christ to set up his kingdom, 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 no reason to doubt, but that the conduct of persons who continue long to refuse acknowledging Christ in the work--especially those who are set to be teachers in his church--will be in like manner provoking to God, as it was in the Jews of old, while refusing to acknowledge Christ; notwithstanding what they may plead of the great stumbling-blocks that are in the way, and the cause they have to doubt of the work. The teachers of the Jewish church found innumerable stumbling-blocks, that were to them insuperable. Many things appeared in Christ, and in the work of the Spirit after his ascension, which were exceeding strange to them; they seemed assured that they had just cause for their scruples. Christ and his work were to the Jews a stumbling-block; "But blessed is he," says Christ, "whosoever shall not be offended in me." As strange and as unexpected as the manner of Christ's appearance was, yet he had not been long in Judea working miracles, before all those who had opportunity to observe, and yet refused to acknowledge him, brought fearful guilt upon themselves in the sight of God; and Christ condemned them, that though "they could discern the face of the sky, and of the earth, yet they could not discern the signs of those times: and why," says he, "even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" Luke xii. at the latter end.

It is not to be supposed that the great Jehovah had bowed the heavens, and appeared here now for so long a time, in such a glorious work of his power and grace--in so extensive a manner, in the most public places of the land, and in almost all parts of it--without giving such evidences of his presence, that great numbers, and even many teachers in his church, can remain guiltless in his sight, without ever receiving and acknowledging him, and giving him honour, and appearing to rejoice in his gracious presence; or without so much as once giving him thanks for so glorious and blessed a work of his grace, wherein his goodness does more appear, than if he had bestowed on us all the temporal blessings that the world affords. A long-continued silence in such a case is undoubtedly provoking to God; especially in ministers. It is a secret kind a opposition, that really tends to hinder the work. Such silent ministers stand in the way of the work of God, as Christ said of old, "He that is not with us is against us." Those who stand wondering at this strange work, not knowing what to make of it, and refusing to receive it--and ready it may be sometimes to speak contemptibly of it, as was the case with the Jews of old--would do well to consider, and to tremble at St. Paul's words to them, Acts xiii. 40, 41. "Beware therefore lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Those who cannot believe the work to be true, because of the extraordinary degree and manner of it, should consider how it was with the unbelieving lord in Samaria, who said, "Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" To whom Elisha said, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." 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 be not their destruction, while it gives light to God's Israel.

I would entreat those who quiet themselves, that they proceed on a principle of prudence, and are waiting to see the issue of things--and what fruits those that are the subjects of this work will bring forth in their lives and conversations--to consider, whether this will justify a long refraining from acknowledging Christ when he appears so wonderfully and graciously present in the land. It is probable that many of those who are thus waiting, know not for what they are waiting. If they wait to see a work of God without difficulties and stumbling-blocks, it will be like the fool's waiting at the river side to have the water all run by. A work of God

without stumbling-blocks is never to be expected. "It must need be that offences come." There never yet was any great manifestation that God made of himself to the world, without many difficulties attending it. It is with the works of God, as with his word: they seem at first full of things that are strange, inconsistent, and difficult to the carnal unbelieving hearts of men. Christ and his work always was, and always will be, a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, a gin and a snare to many. The prophet Hosea, (chap. xiv.) speaking of a glorious revival of religion in God's church--when God would be as the dew unto Israel, who should grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon, whose branches should spread, &c.--concludes all thus; "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

It is probable that the stumbling-blocks that now attend this work, will in some respects be increased, and not diminished. We probably shall see more instances of apostacy and gross iniquity among professors. And if one kind of stumbling-blocks are removed, it is to be expected that others will come. It is with Christ's works as it was with his parables; things that are difficult to men's dark minds are ordered of purpose, for the trial of their dispositions and spiritual sense; and that those of corrupt minds and of an unbelieving, perverse, cavilling spirit, "seeing might see and not understand." Those who are now waiting to see the issue of this work, think they shall be better able to determine by and by; but probably many of them are mistaken. The Jews that saw Christ's miracles, waited to see better evidences of his being the Messiah; they wanted a sign from heaven; but they waited in vain; their stumbling-blocks did not diminish, but increase. They found no end to them, and so were more and more hardened in unbelief. Many have been praying for that glorious reformation spoken of in Scripture, who knew not what they have been praying for, (as it was with the Jews when they prayed for the coming of Christ,) and who, if it should come, would not acknowledge or receive it.

This pretended prudence, in persons waiting so long before they acknowledged this work, will probably in the end prove the greatest imprudence. Hereby they will fail of any share of so great a blessing, and will miss the most precious opportunity of obtaining divine light, grace, and comfort, heavenly and eternal benefits, that God ever gave 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 wants of their souls, they stand at a distance, doubting, wondering, and receiving nothing, and are like to continue thus till the precious season is past.--It is indeed to be wondered at, that those who have doubted of the work, which has been attended with such uncommon external appearances, should be easy in their doubts, without taking thorough pains to inform themselves, by going where such things have been to be seen, narrowly observing and diligently inquiring into them; not contenting themselves with observing two or three instances, nor resting till they were fully informed by their own observation. I do not doubt but that if this course had been taken, it would have convinced all whose minds are not shut up against conviction. How greatly have they erred, who only from the uncertain reproofs of others, have ventured to speak slightly of these things! That caution of an unbelieving Jew might teach them more prudence, Acts v. 38,39. "Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight against God." Whether what has been said in this discourse be enough to produce conviction, that this is the work of God or not; yet I hope that for the future, they will at least hearken to the caution of Gamaliel, now mentioned; so as not to oppose it, or say any thing which has even an indirect tendency to bring it into discredit, lest they should be found opposers of the Holy Ghost. There is no kind of sins so hurtful and dangerous to the souls of men, as those committed against the Holy Ghost. We had better speak against God the Father, or the Son, than to speak against the Holy Spirit in his gracious operations on the hearts of men. Nothing will so much tend for ever to prevent our having any benefit of his operations on our own souls.

If there be any who still resolutely go on to speak contemptibly of these things, I would beg of them to take heed that they be not guilty of the unpardonable sin. When the Holy Spirit is much poured out, and men's lusts,

lukewarmness, and hypocrisy are reproached by its powerful operations, then is the most likely time of any, for this sin to be committed. If the work goes on, it is well if among the many that show an enmity against it, some be not 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, want but one thing of the unpardonable sin, and that is, doing it against inward conviction. And though some are so prudent, as not openly to oppose and reproach this work, yet it is to be feared--at this day, when the Lord is going forth so gloriously against his enemies--that many who are silent and inactive, especially ministers, will bring that curse of the angel of the Lord upon themselves, Judg. v. 23. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not 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 any other than to be greatly affected by it in our spiritual state and circumstances, respecting the favour of God, one way or other. Those who do not become more happy by it, will become far more guilty and miserable. It is always so; such a season as proves an acceptable year, and a time of great favour to them who accept and improve it, proves a day of vengeance to others. Isa. lix. 2. When God sends forth his *word*, it shall not return to him void; much less his *Spirit*. When Christ was upon earth in Judea, many slighted and rejected him; but it proved in the issue to be no matter of indifference to them. God made all that people to feel that Christ had been among them; those who did not feel it to their comfort, felt it to their great sorrow. When God only sent the prophet Ezekiel to the children of Israel, he declared that whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, yet they should know that there had been a prophet among them; how much more may we suppose that when God has appeared so wonderfully in this land, that he will make every one to know that the great Jehovah had been in New England.--I come now, in the last place,

III. To apply myself to those who are the friends of this work, who have been partakers of it, and are zealous to promote it.

Let me earnestly exhort such to give diligent heed to themselves to avoid all errors and misconduct, and whatever may darken and obscure the work; and to give no occasion to those who stand ready to reproach it. The apostle was careful to cut off occasion from those that desired occasion. The same apostle exhorts Titus, to maintain a strict care and watch over himself, that both his preaching and behaviour might be such as "could not be condemned; that he who was of the contrary part might be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them," Tit. ii. 7, 8. We had need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. It is of no small consequence that we should at this day behave ourselves innocently and prudently. We must expect that the great enemy of this work will especially try his utmost with us; and he will especially triumph if he can prevail in any thing to blind and mislead us. He knows it will do more to further his purpose and interest than if he prevailed against a hundred others. We had need to watch and pray, for we are but little children; this roaring lion is too strong for us, and this old serpent too subtle for us.

Humility and self-diffidence, and an entire dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ, will be our best defense. Let us therefore maintain the strictest watch against spiritual pride, or being lifted up with extraordinary experiences and comforts, and the high favours of heaven, that any of us may have received. We had need, after such favours, in a special manner to keep a strict and jealous eye upon our own hearts, lest there should arise self-exalting reflections upon what we have received, and high thoughts of ourselves, as being now some of the most eminent of saints and peculiar favourites of heaven, and that the secret of the Lord is especially with us. Let us not presume, that we above all are fit to be advanced as the great instructors and censors of this evil generation; and, in a high conceit of our own wisdom and discerning, assume to ourselves the airs of prophets, or extraordinary ambassadors of heaven. When we have great discoveries of God made to our souls, we should

not shine bright in our own eyes. Moses, when he had been conversing with God in the mount, though his face shone so as to dazzle the eyes of Aaron and the people, yet he did not shine in his own eyes; “he wist not that his face shone.” Let none think themselves out of danger of this spiritual pride, even in their best frames. God saw that the apostle Paul (though probably the most eminent saint that ever lived) was not out of danger of it, no not when he had just been conversing with God in the third heaven: see 2 Cor. xii. 7. Pride is the worst viper in the heart; it is the first sin that ever entered into the universe, lies lowest of all in the foundation of the whole building of sin, and is the most secret, deceitful, and unsearchable in its ways of working, of any lusts whatever. It is ready to mix with every thing; and nothing is so hateful to God, contrary to the spirit of the gospel, or of so dangerous consequence; and there is no one sin that does so much let in the devil into the hearts of the saints, and expose them to his delusions. I have seen it in many instances, and that in eminent saints. The devil has come in at this door presently after some eminent experience and extraordinary communion with God, and has woefully deluded and led them astray, till God has mercifully opened their eyes and delivered them; and they themselves have afterwards been made sensible that it was pride that betrayed them.

Some of the true friends of the work of God’s Spirit have erred in giving too much heed to impulses and strong impressions on their minds, as though they were immediate significations from heaven to them, of something that should come to pass, or something that it was the mind and will of God that they should do, which was not signified or revealed any where in the Bible without those impulses. These impressions, if they are truly from the Spirit of God, are of a quite different nature from his gracious influences 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, 1 Cor. xiii.

One reason why some have been ready to lay weight on such impulses, is an opinion they have had, that the glory of the approaching happy days of the church would partly consist in restoring those *extraordinary gifts* of the Spirit. This opinion, I believe, arises partly through want of duly considering and comparing the nature and value of those two kinds of influences of the Spirit, *viz.* those that are ordinary and gracious, and those that are extraordinary and miraculous. The former are by far the most excellent and glorious; as the apostle largely shows. (1 Cor. xii. 31, &c.) 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;” *i.e.* a more excellent way of the influence of the Spirit. And then he goes on, in the next chapter, to show what that more excellent way is, even the grace of the Spirit, which summarily consists in charity, or divine love. And throughout that chapter he shows the great preference of that above inspiration. God communicates his own nature to the soul in saving *grace* in the heart, more than in all miraculous *gifts*. The blessed image of God consists in *that* and not in *these*. The excellency, happiness, and glory of the soul, immediately consists in the former. That is a root which bears infinitely more excellent fruit. Salvation and the eternal enjoyment of God is promised to divine grace, but not to inspiration. A man may have those extraordinary gifts, and yet be abominable to God, and go to hell. The spiritual and eternal life of the soul consists in the grace of the Spirit, which God bestows only on his favourites and dear children. He has sometimes thrown out the other as it were to dogs and swine, as he did to Balaam, Saul, and Judas; and some who, in the primitive times of the christian church, committed the unpardonable sin. (Heb. vi.) Many wicked men at the day of the judgment will plead, “Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works.” The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles, was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts, was a thousand times more their dignity and honour, than their miraculous gifts. The things in which we find David comforting himself, 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; but yet he esteems all things but loss for the excellency 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; in which Christ directs them to rejoice, much more than in the devils being subject to them. To have grace in the heart, is a higher privilege than the blessed Virgin herself had, in having the body of the second person in the Trinity conceived in her womb, by the power of the Highest overshadowing her: Luke xi. 27, 28. “And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto him; Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked! But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” See also to the same purpose, Matt. xii. 47, &c.--The influence of the Holy Spirit, or divine charity in the heart, is the greatest privilege and glory of the highest archangel in heaven; yea, this is the very thing by which the creature has fellowship with God himself, with the Father and the Son, in their beauty and happiness. Hereby the saints 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 *end* of all extraordinary gifts, as the apostle shows, Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13. They are good for nothing, any further than as they are subordinate to this end; they will be so far from profiting any without it, that they will only aggravate their misery. This is, as the apostle observes, the most excellent way of God’s communicating his Spirit to his church, it is the greatest glory of the church in all ages. This glory is what makes the church on earth most like the church in heaven, when prophecy, and tongues, and other miraculous gifts, cease. And God communicates his Spirit only in that more excellent way of which the apostle speaks, *viz.* *charity* or divine love, “which never faileth.” Therefore the glory of the approaching happy state of the church does not at all require these extraordinary gifts. As that state of the church will be nearest of any to its perfect state in heaven, so I believe it will be like it in this, that all extraordinary gifts shall have ceased and vanished away; and all those stars, and the moon with the reflected light they gave in the night, or in a dark season, shall be swallowed up in the sun of divine love. The apostle speaks of these gifts of inspiration as childish things, in comparison of the influence of the Spirit in divine love; things given to the church only to support it in its minority, till the church should have a complete standing rule established, and all the ordinary means of grace should be settled; but as things that should cease, as the church advanced to the state of manhood. 1 Cor. xiii. 11. “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought 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 away in the church--when the christian church should be advanced from a state of minority to a state of manhood--he seems to have respect to its coming to an adult state in this world, as well as in heaven; for he speaks of such a state of manhood, wherein those three things, Faith, Hope, and Charity, should remain after miracles and revelation had ceased; as in the last verse, and “now abideth [*lgk txt*], *remaineth*) Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three.” The apostle’s manner of speaking here shows an evident reference to what he had just been saying before; and here is a manifest *antithesis*, between *remaining*, and that *failing*, *ceasing*, and *vanishing away*, spoken of in the 8th verse. The apostle had been showing how all those gifts of inspiration, which were the leading-strings of the christian church in its infancy, should vanish away, when the church came to a state of manhood. Then he returns to observe, what things remain after those had failed and ceased; and he observes that those three things shall remain in the church, Faith, Hope, and Charity: and therefore the adult state of the church he speaks of, is the more perfect one at which it shall arrive on earth, especially in the latter ages of the world. And this was the more properly observed to the church at Corinth, upon two accounts; because the apostle had before observed to that church, that they were in a state of infancy, chap. iii. 1, 2. And because that church seems above all others to have abounded with miraculous gifts.--When the expected glorious state of the church comes, the increase of light shall be so great that it will in some respect answer what is said, ver. 12. of *seeing face to face*. (See Isa. xxiv. 23. and xxv. 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 it would add nothing to the glory of those times, but rather diminish from it. For my part, I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit, showing Christ's spiritual divine beauty, infinite grace, and dying love, drawing forth the holy exercises of faith, divine love, sweet complacency, and humble joy in God, one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetic visions and revelations the whole year. It appears to me much more probable that God should give immediate revelation to his saints in the dark times of prophecy, 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 of those extraordinary gifts to introduce this happy state, and set up the kingdom of God through the world; I have seen so much of the power of God in a more excellent way, as to convince me that God can easily do it without.

I would therefore entreat the people of God to be very cautious how they give heed to such things. I have seen them fail in very many instances, and know by experience that impressions being made with great power, and upon the minds of true, yea eminent, saints--even in the midst of extraordinary exercises of grace, and sweet communion with God, and attended with texts of Scripture strongly impressed on the mind--are no sure signs of their being revelations from heaven. I have known such impressions fail, in some instances, attended with all these circumstances. They who leave the sure word of prophecy--which God has given us as a light shining in a dark place--to follow such impressions and impulses, leave the guidance of the polar star, to follow *a Jack with a lantern*. No wonder therefore that sometimes they are led into woeful extravagancies.

Moreover, seeing inspiration is not to be expected, *let us not despise human learning*. They who assert that human learning is of little or no use in the work of the ministry, do not well consider what they say; if they did, they would not say it. By human learning I mean, and suppose others mean, the improvement of common knowledge by human and outward means. And therefore to say, that human learning is of no use, is as much as to say that the education of a child, or that the common knowledge which a grown man has more than a little child, is of no use. At this rate, a child of four years old is as fit for a teacher in the church of God, with the same degree of grace--and capable of doing as much to advance the kingdom of Christ, by his instruction--as a very knowing man of thirty years of age. If adult persons have greater ability and advantage to do service, because they have more knowledge than a little child, then doubtless if they have more human knowledge still, with the same degree of grace, they would have still greater ability and advantage to do service. An increase of knowledge, without doubt, increases a man's advantage either to do good or hurt, according as he is disposed. It is too manifest to be denied, that God made great use of human learning in the apostle Paul, as he also did in Moses and Solomon.

And if knowledge, obtained by human means, is not to be despised, then it will follow that the means of obtaining it are not to be neglected, *viz. study*; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for publicly instructing others. And though having the heart full of the powerful influences of the Spirit of God, may at some time enable persons to speak profitably, yea, very excellently, without study; yet this will not warrant us needlessly to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon it that the angel of the Lord will bear us up, and keep us from dashing our foot against a stone, when there is another way to go down, though it be not so quick. And I would pray, that *method*, in public discourses, which tends greatly to help both the understanding and memory, may not be wholly neglected.

Another thing I would beg the dear children of God more fully to consider of, is, how far, and upon what grounds, the rules of the Holy Scriptures will truly justify their passing censures upon other professing Christians, as hypocrites, and ignorant of real religion. We all know that there is a judging and censuring of some sort or other, that the Scripture very often and very strictly forbids. I desire that those rules of Scripture may be looked into, and thoroughly weighed; and that it may be considered whether our taking it upon us to

discern the state of other--and to pass sentence upon them as wicked men, though professing Christians, and of a good visible conversation--be not really forbidden by Christ in the New Testament. If it be, then doubtless the disciples of Christ ought to avoid this practice, however sufficient they may think themselves for it, or however needful, or of good tendency, they may think it. It is plain that the sort of judgment which God claims as his prerogative, whatever that be, is forbidden. We know that a certain judging of the hearts of the children of men, is often spoken of as the great prerogative of God, and which belongs only to him; as in 1 Kings viii. 39. "Forgive, and do, and give unto every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." And if we examine, we shall find that the judging of hearts which is spoken of as God's prerogative, relates not only to the aims and dispositions of men's hearts in particular actions, but chiefly to the state of their hearts as the professors of religion, and with regard to that profession. This will appear very manifest by looking over the following scriptures; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Psal. vii. 9, 10, 11. Psal. xxvi. throughout. Prov. xvi. 2. and xvii. 3. and xxi. 2. Job ii. 23, 24, 25. Rev. ii. 22, 23. That sort of judging which is God's proper business, is forbidden, as Rom. xiv. 4. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." Jam. iv. 12. "There is one lawgiver that is able to save or destroy; who are thou that judgest another?" 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "But with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea I judge not mine own self; but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

Again, whatsoever kind of judging is the proper work and business of the day of judgment, is what we are forbidden, as in 1 Cor. iv. 5. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come; who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God." But to distinguish hypocrites, that have the form of godliness and the visible conversation of godly men, from true saints; or, to separate the sheep from the goats, is the proper business of the day of judgment; yea it is represented as the main business and end of that day. They therefore do greatly err who take it upon them positively to determine who are sincere, and who are not--to draw the dividing line between true saints and hypocrites, and to separate between sheep and goats, setting the one on the right hand and the other on the left--and to distinguish and gather out the tares from amongst the wheat. Many of the servants of the owner of the field are very ready to think themselves sufficient for this, and are forward to offer their service to this end; but their Lord says, "May, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest;" and in the time of the harvest I will take care to see a thorough separation made; as Matt. xiii. 28, 29, 30. Agreeably to that forementioned prohibition of the apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 5. "Judge nothing before the time." In this parable, by the servants who have the care of the fruit of the field, is doubtless meant the same with the servants who have the care of the fruit of the vineyard, Luke xx. and who are elsewhere represented as servants of the Lord of the harvest, appointed as labourers in his harvest. These we know are ministers of the gospel. *Now* is that parable in the 13th of Matthew fulfilled: "While men sleep," (during a long sleepy, dead time in the church,) "the enemy has sowed tares;" now is the time "when the blade is sprung up," and religion is reviving; and now some of the servants who have the care of the field say, "Let us go and gather up the tares."--I know there is a great aptness in men who suppose they have had some experience of the power of religion, to think themselves sufficient to discern and determine the state of others by a little conversation with them; and experience has taught me that this is an error. I once did not imagine that the heart of man had been so unsearchable as it is. I am less charitable, and less uncharitable than once I was. I find more things in wicked men that may counterfeit, and make a fair show of, piety; and more ways that the remaining corruption of the godly may make them appear like carnal men, formalists, and dead hypocrites, than once I knew of. The longer I live, the less I wonder that God challenges it as his prerogative to try the hearts of the children of men, and directs that this business should be let alone till harvest. 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, and dim-sighted creature--one of so much blindness, pride,

partiality, prejudice, and deceitfulness of heart--but has committed it into the hands of one infinitely fitter for it, and has made it his prerogative.

The talk of some persons, and the account they give of their experiences, is exceedingly satisfying, and such as forbids and banishes the thought of their being any other than the precious children of God. It obliges, and as it were forces, full charity; but yet we must allow the Scriptures to stand good that speak of every thing in the saint, belonging to the spiritual and divine life, as hidden. (Col. iii. 3, 4.) Their food is the hidden manna; they have meat to eat that others know not of; a stranger intermeddles not with their joys. The heart in which they possess their divine distinguishing ornaments, is the hidden man, and in the sight of God only, 1 Pet. iii. 4. Their new name, which Christ has given them, no man knows but he that receives it, Rev. ii. 17. The praise of the true Israelites, whose circumcision is that of the heart, is not of men but of God, Rom. ii. 29. that is, they can be certainly known and discerned to be Israelites, so as to have the honour that belongs to such, only of God; as appears by the use of the like expression by the same apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 5. Here he speaks of its being God's prerogative to judge who are upright Christians, and what he will do at the day of judgment, adding, "and then shall every man have praise of God."

The instance of *Judas* is remarkable; whom--though he had been so much amongst the rest of the disciples, all persons of true experience, yet--his associates never seemed to have entertained a thought of his being any other than a true disciple, till he discovered himself by his scandalous practice.--And the instance of *Ahitophel* is also very remarkable; David did not suspect him, though so wise and holy a man, so great a divine, and had such a great acquaintance with Scripture. He knew more than all his teachers, more than the ancients, was grown old in experience, and was in the greatest ripeness of his judgment. He was a great prophet, and was intimately acquainted with Ahitophel, he being his familiar friend, and most intimate companion in religious and spiritual concerns. Yet David not only never discovered him to be a hypocrite, but relied upon him as a true saint. He relished his religious discourse, it was sweet to him and he counted him an eminent saint; so that he made him above any other man his guide and counsellor in soul matters; but yet he was not only no saint, but a notoriously wicked man, a murderous, vile wretch. Psal. lv. 11-14. "Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets: for it was not an open enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance: we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

To suppose that men have ability and right do determine the state of the souls of visible Christians, and so to make an open separation between saints and hypocrites, that true saints may be of one visible company, and hypocrites of another, separated by a partition that men make, carries in it an inconsistency: for it supposes that God has given men power to make another visible church, within his visible church; for by visible Christians or visible saints is meant, persons who have a right to be received as such in the eye of a public charity. None can have a right to exclude any one of this visible church but in the way of that regular ecclesiastical proceeding, which God has established in his visible church.-I beg of those who have a true zeal for promoting this work of God, well to consider these things. I am persuaded, that as many of them as have much to do with souls, if they do not hearken to me now, will be of the same mind when they have had more experience.

And another thing that I would entreat the zealous friends of this glorious work of God to avoid, is managing the controversy with opposers with too much heat, and appearance of an angry zeal; and particularly insisting very much in public prayer and preaching, on the persecution of opposers. If their persecution were ten times so great as it is, me thinks it would not be best to say so much about it. If it becomes Christians to be like lambs, not apt to complain and cry when they are hurt; it becomes them to be dumb and not to open their mouth, after the example of our dear Redeemer; and not to be like swine, that are apt to scream aloud when they are

touched. We should not be ready presently to think and speak of tire from heaven, when the Samaritans oppose us, and will not receive us into their villages. God's zealous ministers would do well to think of the direction the apostle Paul gave to a zealous minister, 2 Tim. ii. 24--26. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give 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."

I would humbly recommend to those that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and would advance his kingdom, a good attendance to that excellent rule of prudence which Christ has left us, Matt. ix. 16, 17. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." I am afraid the wine is now running out in some part of this land, for want of attending to this rule. For though I believe we have confined ourselves too much to a certain stated method and form in the management of our religious affairs; which has had a tendency to cause all our religion to degenerate into mere formality; yet whatever has the appearance of a great innovation--that tends much to shock and surprise people's minds, and to set them a talking and disputing--tends greatly to hinder the progress of the power of religion. It raises the opposition of some, diverts the mind of others, and perplexes many with doubts and scruples. It causes people to swerve from their great business, and turn aside to vain jangling. Therefore that which is very much beside the common practice, unless it be a thing in its own nature of considerable importance, had better be avoided. Herein we shall follow the example of one who had the greatest success in propagating the power of religion. 1 Cor. ix. 20-23. "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

Engaging Culture Disciplines and Standards

T. M. Moore

1 Repudiate

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Matthew 21.12, 13

A lesson about culture

The story of Jesus driving the money-changers out of the temple has an air of comic relief to it.

Can't you just see those men, ducking the blows from Jesus' whip as they grab for money and merchandise, while the crowd looks on, shocked, but probably amused?

Jesus had come to the very heart of Jewish life and culture – the temple. There He expected to take up the purposes of God, to seek Him in prayer and to make Him known through teaching. Instead, He encountered this unlawful trafficking in goods and services, within the temple precincts, and it made Him furious.

In this episode Jesus provides an important lesson for us, His followers, in thinking about how we should engage the culture around us each day. Culture consists of artifacts, institutions, and conventions, and includes everything from language, to fashion and entertainment, tools and technologies, public policies and the laws of the land. Culture is what human beings make in order to define, sustain, and enrich their lives. Culture can be very good; God Himself has given us the gifts and resources for making culture. But He expects us to use culture in ways that will honor Him and benefit our fellow human beings.

The money-changers in the temple were neither honoring God nor benefiting their neighbors. They were taking advantage of people, disregarding God's purpose for His temple in order to make a profit on those who had come from far away to make an offering to the Lord. Jesus observed that this practice, this bit of local culture, if you will, was contrary to God's purpose, and, in dramatic fashion, He made known His displeasure in a most public way.

When culture is bad

From this we learn that sometimes proper Christian engagement with culture involves *repudiating* culture that honors neither God nor men.

Jesus didn't just *avoid* the money-changers' booths. He *overturned* them, taking the risk that He might incur the wrath of the powers-that-be. But everyone seems to have understood that this practice was rather sordid, and no one moved to make Jesus pay for His action. Sometimes culture is so bad, so dishonoring to God and

hurtful to our neighbors, that believers need to repudiate the use of it, and that over and over again, if necessary (we recall that Jesus cleansed the temple twice, cf. Jn. 2).

Christians should repudiate all forms of culture which deliberately violate the Law of God or which take advantage of neighbors or encourage them to break God's Law.

Here a wide range of cultural artifacts and practices come to mind. Christians should absolutely repudiate such obvious evils as abortion, pornography, drug dealing and abuse, political corruption, practices or laws that allow the exploitation of workers, women, immigrants, or the poor, and more.

But other, less obviously wicked practices should also be rejected and condemned by Christians, such as incivility, gossiping, slipshod work practices, taking advantage of others, reckless driving, bullying, and many more. It's not enough that believers merely avoid such practices; we must be prepared to speak out against and repudiate them publicly.

A public effort

Repudiating corrupt or unlawful forms of culture involves more than simply not making use of them. We must be prepared to argue publicly against such practices, to pursue lawful actions to curtail or forbid them – and to rebuke or punish those who pursue them – and to make very sure that no such cultural forms or practices are tolerated in our own lives or communities.

Culture in all its forms can have powerful effects on how we think and live. In our day, many forms of culture can only be described as ungodly, including our uncivil use of language and the loss of mutual respect in the public square.

As we see from the example of our Lord Jesus, it is part of the Christian's culture-making calling to expose and expunge as many such practices and forms as are within our reach.

For reflection or discussion

1. "Christians should repudiate all forms of culture which deliberately violate the Law of God or which take advantage of neighbors or encourage them to break God's Law." Do you agree with this? What would this require on your part?
2. What are the consequences when Christians refuse to repudiate culture that does not honor God and hurts others?

3. Can you think of any cultural forms or practices in your community which are working to the detriment of the community? Do churches have a responsibility to address these?
4. What are some of the risks involved in working to repudiate ungodly cultural forms and practices? How can believers help one another in facing these risks?
5. What are your goals for this study? What do you hope to learn?

Next steps: Talk with some Christian friends. What would be some examples of ungodly cultural forms or practices in your community that believers should unite to repudiate? How might they begin to do that?

For prayer:

2 Appropriate

“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.” Acts 7.22

A gift of common grace

We make a mistake as Christians if we hold the view that all non-Christian culture is worthless and should be avoided. This is simply not the case.

God has given gifts for making culture to every human being, and very often those who do not know Him are capable of making artifacts, establishing institutions, or promoting conventions that actually are very useful for human flourishing.

This is a measure of God’s [common grace](#) to all people. Believers must not despise such gifts, and we must not ignore or avoid them.

In his sermon to the religious leaders of the day, Stephen made the point that Moses had been schooled in the culture, language, and lore of the Egyptians. He understood court protocol, what was appropriate and what was not in approaching the Pharaoh. He was well aware of the role that magicians and priests played as advisors to Pharaoh. One would have to reckon with these lackeys if he wanted to persuade the king of some particular course of action.

I do not suggest that Moses enrolled in Pharaoh’s court school with the idea of gaining as much as he could for later service to God. Certainly his parents may have had such an idea in mind. Moses was brought up in Pharaoh’s court, so he could hardly avoid whatever was taught or practiced there.

Daniel and his three friends might have envisioned themselves as being in a better position to serve God and His people if they took up the challenge of learning the ways of the Babylonian court. Paul must have studied Greek philosophy and Roman law in order to serve the community of God’s people more effectively. He could not have understood, as he pored over those books and studies, how the Lord Jesus would employ his secular learning for Kingdom purposes.

God’s gifts – to us!

The point is that all good cultural forms and practices, coming as they do from the hand of God, are available for the people of God to use in furthering His Kingdom and glory.

We do not *repudiate* those unbelieving aspects of culture which are good and useful. Rather, we *appropriate* all such forms, learning as much as we can about them and considering ways they might be put to use for the glory of God.

Appropriating the good products of unbelieving culture is the second way that Christians engage the culture around them. What does this involve?

First, we have to be able to *recognize* good culture when we see it. We’ll talk more about this in the last two segments of this series. For now, as Paul counsels, whatever artifacts, institutions, or conventions of our

contemporary culture give evidence of being true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or worthy of sincere praise, we should consider such cultural forms and practices and recognize the value they hold for bringing God's goodness to others. All such cultural forms and practices fall within the universe of culture which Christians may engage with a view to appropriating them for the Kingdom of God (Phil. 4.8).

Mastering good culture

We must learn as much as we can about such forms, so that we are able to master their use with the best of our unbelieving contemporaries. We cannot make the most of these viable forms unless we strive for excellence in our own use of them, whether in our work or simply as a matter of personal improvement.

Christians did not invent writing, for example, or the forms of poetry and literature. Nor did we invent computers, the Internet, or organized sports. It is clear, however, that such conventions and forms are available to us for the work of the Kingdom. But if we do not take the time to learn these cultural forms and practices, and to master their use, whatever we do with them in the Kingdom will be less than honoring to God and beneficial to others.

There is much good to be found in the culture of our unbelieving age. Christians engage that culture wisely and well when we do so in order to appropriate good cultural forms and practices for the work of the Kingdom of God.

For reflection or discussion

1. "For now, as Paul counsels, whatever artifacts, institutions, or conventions of our contemporary culture give evidence of being true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or worthy of sincere praise...all such cultural forms and practices fall within the universe of culture which Christians may engage with a view to appropriating for the Kingdom of God (Phil. 4.8)." Give some examples of this kind of "good" culture from the unbelieving world:
2. What would you say are the basic steps to take in mastering any form of culture? Why should Christians want to do this?
3. What are some cultural forms or practice you engage each week that have the potential to benefit others? Are you as skilled and consistent in the use of these as you might be? Can you think of some ways you might improve your use of these resources?

4. What cultural interests do you have that clearly have their origin in the unbelieving world – such as, film, literature, politics, and the like? Suggest some ways these forms might be “take captive” and put to work in advancing the Kingdom of God (2 Cor. 10.3-5):

5. What are the most important things to keep in mind when we are appropriating unbelieving cultural forms and practices for the Kingdom and glory of God (cf. 1 Cor. 10.31-11.1)?

Next steps: What are some forms of unbelieving culture that you make use of every day? Would you describe yourself as seeking to appropriate those forms for the Kingdom of God? Talk with some Christian friends about this. How can you help one another learn and make use of the culture of the unbelieving world in ways that honor God and bless your neighbors?

For prayer:

3 Redirect

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. Acts 4.32

The greatest challenge

Citizenship in the Kingdom of God changes everything in a person's life, including the ways we engage culture.

We've seen thus far that Christians will want to *repudiate* certain cultural forms or practices because they neither honor God nor bless human beings. But that doesn't mean that all culture beyond the pale of the Kingdom is to be avoided. Some aspects of culture in the unbelieving world are quite good, and can be *appropriated* by the followers of Christ to help us in our work of seeking and advancing the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of engaging culture from within the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is our calling to *redirect* culture away from ourselves to the needs of others and the glory of God.

Typically we think of culture as those artifacts, institutions, and conventions that we create or use in order to define, sustain, and enrich our lives. And culture certainly is that.

Yet in the Kingdom of God the creation and use of culture must not be undertaken for mere self-interest. The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it – including all culture, and all the culture that makes up our individual lives (Ps. 24.1). In the Kingdom of God we understand that a new economy has arrived on the human scene. That economy calls for self-denial and sacrifice in the service of others, and this includes all the culture of our lives.

The first Christians

The first Christians understood this implicitly.

They immediately saw that the various forms of culture in their possession were not to be grasped. Instead, they gave up their goods as situations arose in order to meet the needs of the community as a whole.

The believers in Jerusalem began sharing possessions, giving up money, opening their homes for prayer and fellowship, selling excess property to care for the needs of the poor, and making gifts of clothing for others. The cultural resources at their disposal, which they had previously used only for themselves and those closest to them, became powerful tools for expressing the love of God among the members of the Body of Christ and the surrounding community.

All good gifts of culture, whether made or appropriated, are not to be kept as private possessions, to be indulged only by those who "own" them. The earth is the Lord's, and when the Lord's people have needs, the Lord calls His people to *redirect* their cultural resources to help meet the needs of others.

Two examples

This redirecting of culture is most readily observable in two ways.

First, giving: The first Christians were generous to a fault. They gave money to support the poor, care for widows, provide for ministers, relieve the victims of famine, and further the work of missions. They gave readily and abundantly in a society where monetary resources were, in the main, scarce, and where people were accustomed to pinching every penny and consuming all their income on themselves. Christians gave liberally and joyfully, thus making available a wealth of tangible evidence that a new reality – the Kingdom of God – had broken into history.

Second, by the practice of hospitality Christians demonstrated that, in the Body of Christ, believers were all family members with one Father and one King. Christians offered their homes as meeting places for churches, temporary shelters for those in need of housing, and venues within which to strengthen the bonds of fellowship with other members. They shared meals together, worshiped together, and, doubtless, laughed and played together in one another's homes.

Money and homes were only the most prominent ways that Christians redirected their cultural possessions for advancing the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. We are not our own; we have been bought with a price. And all that we have belongs to Him Who bought us, and Who calls us to show His love by every means to the watching world, including the culture He has entrusted to us.

For reflection or discussion

1. "All good gifts of culture, whether made or appropriated, are not to be kept as private possessions, to be indulged only by those who "own" them. The earth is the Lord's, and when the Lord's people have needs, the Lord calls His people to redirect their cultural resources to help meet the needs of others." Does this principle still apply today? Discuss some ways this should be practiced in the Christian community:
2. What are the greatest obstacles we have to overcome in "redirecting" culture away from ourselves to the needs of others?
3. Why does redirecting our cultural resources in this way present such a powerful witness to the Lord Jesus?
4. What are the biggest obstacles keeping Christians today from being more effective, consistent, and generous in redirecting their cultural forms and practices? Suggest some ways to overcome these obstacles in your own life.

5. Do local churches together have any responsibility for the material needs of people in the larger community? Why or why not? How might churches work together to redirect some of their cultural resources to meet needs in the larger community?

Next steps: What are some ways that a local church serves to redirect the gifts of culture to meet the needs of others? Ask one of your church's deacons to explain.

For prayer:

4 Transform

Do not let your adorning be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 1 Peter 3.3, 4

A work in progress...

What matters most of all in the way Christians engage culture is making sure that we are doing so as God Himself would – glorifying and honoring Him in all things (1 Cor. 10.31).

Culture is a gift from God intended to bring honor to Him and benefit to human beings. Christians *repudiate* all forms of culture that fail these tests. They *appropriate* as much as they can from the culture around them, embracing God's good gifts from whatever source they may be available. And they *redirect* their use of culture to serve others by giving freely of what God entrusts to them, sharing all their cultural possessions as needs arise which they can meet.

But the Christian engagement with culture goes beyond even this. Christians themselves are a work in progress. Under the teaching and shaping of the Holy Spirit, we are being increasingly transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18). All our thoughts, affections, values, priorities, words, and deeds are a work zone of God's Spirit, Who is at work within us to make us willing and able to do what is pleasing to God (Phil 2.13), and that exceeding abundantly above all that we could ever dare to ask or think (Eph. 3.20).

...and our culture, too

It makes sense to think, therefore, that, as *we* are being transformed for better citizenship in the Kingdom of God, so too the culture we engage would be *transformed* as well, from something that merely satisfies our human needs to something that glorifies God and benefits others.

Peter charged the women believers of Asia Minor to pioneer in this by transforming the way the world thinks about beauty. In Peter's day, as in ours, feminine beauty was regarded as a physical thing, something to be observed and admired. And, as in our day, women in the Roman Empire of the first century had perfected a number of ways of enhancing their physical beauty in order to make a more pleasing, and perhaps more enticing, presence in the world. The ladies of Peter's day braided their hair, put on makeup, strapped on baubles and bangles and bright shiny beads, robed themselves appealingly, and dabbed on that world's equivalent of Chanel No 5.

A challenge to the ladies

But Peter challenged the women of his day to take hold of the very idea of "beauty" – a very culturally specific notion, as Umberto Eco has shown (*A History of Beauty*) – and make it something altogether different from what anyone had imagined before.

He called on the women of the churches in Asia Minor to cultivate an inward, spiritual beauty that would show itself to the world in gentleness, kindness, softness, and unfailing patience and love.

Anyone who has known such a woman – and some of us have – will readily agree that, though this woman may be outwardly beautiful to look upon, her inner beauty is by far the stronger of the two.

Over the years Christians have transformed culture in more ways than we might imagine. In music, the arts, education, science, the workplace, civil government, and technology, Christians have appropriated existing cultural forms, or invented new ones, and, in the process of redirecting them to Kingdom uses, have transformed them altogether.

This is a challenge which goes out to every believer, every day. In our conversation, our approach to work, the ways we treat others – forms of culture, all – we must work to transform what people experience in such a way as to show the world the hope we have in Jesus Christ and the power which is ours in His Kingdom of light and truth (1 Pet. 3.15).

Christians take up the challenge of transforming their culture every day. As we learn more about the character of the Kingdom of God – a Kingdom of righteousness, above all – that cannot help but transform our own lives, and transform as well every aspect of our engagement with culture.

For reflection or discussion

1. “But Peter challenged the women of his day to take hold of the very idea of “beauty” – a very culturally specific notion, as Umberto Eco has shown (*A History of Beauty*) – and to make it something altogether different from what anyone had imagined before. He called on the women of the churches in Asia Minor to cultivate an inward, spiritual beauty that would show itself to the world in gentleness, kindness, softness, and unfailing patience and love. Anyone who has known such a woman – and some of us have – will readily agree that, though this woman may be outwardly beautiful to look upon, her inner beauty is by far the stronger of the two.” Can you identify any principles here to guide you in thinking about transforming the culture you use each day?
2. Meditate on Romans 12.1, 2. Do you think today’s Christians are *transforming* culture or *conforming* to it? Explain:
3. Think of your work, whatever it may be. What kinds of cultural forms – artifacts, institutions, or conventions – do you engage every day in your work? Are any of these candidates for being transformed for Kingdom purposes?

4. Meditate on Genesis 4.19-24. The children of Cain invented music and poetry. But David and other psalmists transformed those cultural forms. In what ways?

5. The Romans used a cross to terrorize people and keep them in line. But Jesus transformed the meaning of the cross. How?

Next steps: How has your use of culture changed since you became a Christian? Talk with some of your Christian friends. In what ways can you help one another become even more aggressive at transforming the culture of your lives?

For prayer:

5 Innovate

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, "This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Luke 22.19

Cultural innovators

From the beginning of the Christian movement, the followers of Jesus Christ have blazed new trails in creating culture. They have been used to *innovate* a great many new cultural forms that have brought glory to God and benefit to others to this day.

Jesus Himself showed the way in this by innovating two new forms of culture for use by His people in worship – baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two venerable forms dramatize so many powerful truths of the Christian faith that it is all but unthinkable for a body of believers to gather without regularly making use of them.

Christians over the centuries have innovated other forms of culture as well. They promoted the expansion of literacy and education; changed the face of civil law; enlarged the possibilities of music; created new literary forms, such as the sonnet; improved working conditions by creating the craft guild; invented new types of architecture; standardized vernacular tongues through the translation of Scripture; and birthed the scientific revolution and all the basic practices which still define the terms of that now-secular enterprise.

Christians even changed the way letters are written. A typical letter during the waning years of the Roman Empire would begin with a greeting that said something like, "Greetings and good health." Then on to the body of the letter.

Compare that with Paul's, "Grace to you, and peace, from God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Christians worked to create freedom for slaves and to free waste lands for cultivation and development by draining swamps and improving tools for cultivating the soil.

Christians invented movable type printing, the popular book, and mass pop culture – in the form of prints, etchings, banners, songs and hymns, and inexpensive broadside books.

Christians created the university and public education. The list goes on. Because culture in all its forms provides opportunity for glorifying God and blessing others, it's not surprising that Christians have employed their minds and talents to *innovate* a wide variety of cultural forms and improvements.

Called to innovate

We don't all have to be geniuses in order to innovate in the way we use culture.

For example, what if we were to *repudiate*, once and for all, all gossip and all carping and complaining, and instead were to work hard day by day to *redirect* our tongues toward building others up (Eph. 4.29)? We would have to *innovate* some new ways of engaging people in conversation, by getting to know people and taking a real

interest in them, becoming better listeners, making sure all our words were seasoned with grace, and speaking truth in love at all times.

If every believer just worked a bit harder to innovate new forms of conversation, I'm persuaded the world would certainly notice the difference!

Or what if believers decided, let's say, just to be a bit provocative, to *innovate* our approach to Sundays. Suppose we decided we were going to honor the Lord's Day and not indulge our favorite cultural pastimes, diversions, or interests, but instead give ourselves, in various ways through the day, to meditating on God, reflecting on the wonders of His creation, rejoicing in His redemption, enjoying the fellowship of His saints, and ignoring the goings-on of the world?

Actually, that wouldn't so much be *innovating* the Lord's Day as *rediscovering* its proper use – a use which we have *innovated* amiss in order to accommodate the weaknesses of our flesh.

Sending a signal

Innovations like this would send a sure signal to the world that we are a different people, who serve a different King, and live according to a different economy and different values. And that, after all, is what living the Kingdom life is all about.

For reflection or discussion

1. “We don't all have to be geniuses in order to innovate in the way we use culture. For example, what if we were to *repudiate*, once and for all, all gossip and all carping and complaining, and instead were to work hard day by day to *redirect* our tongues toward building others up (Eph. 4:29)?” Discuss what might be involved for Christians to innovate some new conversational practices in their lives, both in the world and in the church:
2. Can you think of any other areas of cultural engagement where you might be able to innovate new forms or expressions of culture, for the glory of God and the benefit of your neighbors?
3. What about churches? Should churches be involved in encouraging cultural innovation, say, in education or the arts or job placement? Why or why not?

4. Not all cultural innovation is good. How can we know which is and which isn't? For example, is it a good thing for a nation to invest in creating renewable energy sources? Should Christians support such cultural innovation?

5. Is it possible to innovate cultural forms – such as worship, disciple-making, and the like – *away* from the Lord's standards? How would we be able to tell when this was happening?

Next steps: How does your church work to equip members for their cultural lives? Talk with some church leaders about this question.

For prayer:

6 Three “Legs”

For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding and the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2.1-3

Five disciplines

We have considered five specific ways in which Christians are called to engage culture in their service to God and their neighbors.

Some culture they must *repudiate* as being of no value and offensive to God. Yet there are many good forms of culture, even within the culture of the unbelieving world, that Christians may *appropriate* for their service in God’s Kingdom. All their existing culture, as well as whatever they may appropriate, Christians are to *redirect* toward the needs and concerns of others. In the process, they will engage in *transforming* some cultural forms and *innovating* others, especially at the very basic and humble levels of everyday life.

All this cultural engagement suggests *standards*, ways of thinking about, making, using, and judging culture in order to make sure that we engage culture in ways that are pleasing to God and beneficial to others.

Most of us are not going to become professional culture critics. Nevertheless, we must all assume some posture of judgment toward culture so that we are able to “judge righteous judgment” as our Lord Jesus commands (Jn. 7.24). But even though our base for judging culture be not an accredited lectern or an authoritative throne, but only, shall we say, a humble stool, we still need standards to help us.

Standards suggest knowledge and wisdom, all the treasures of which are stored up in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beauty, goodness, and truth

In His Word the Lord indicates *three primary standards* which can serve as sure legs for the humble stool on which we sit to judge the culture we must engage each day.

These three – beauty, goodness, and truth – are braced, as it were, by three additional guides for judging culture – the Scriptures, the heritage of Christian culture, and the work of God’s Spirit today. We will consider the three “legs” of our judgment seat in this installment, and finish our study by examining the “braces” which hold together our “judgment stool” for taking our seat to engage culture.

Beauty, goodness, and truth, contrary to what many suppose, are not criteria invented by Plato for discovering the good and reliable forms of the world. Scripture teaches these from the very beginning, and Scripture antedates the Greek philosophers by many centuries.

Beauty, goodness, and truth are nothing other than expressions of the character of God into time and creation, supremely, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian artists – such as Albrecht Dürer and Gerard Manley Hopkins – looked to the creation, as well as to Jesus, to discover the patterns of beauty which would define their own art.

Centuries of Christians have taken their understanding of goodness from the teaching of God's Law and the example of Jesus Christ. And the Scriptures as a whole, which teach us primarily about Jesus (Jn. 5.39), have served as a sounding-board and filter for truth claims in every age.

Grow in the Lord

If we would have strong legs for our humble judgment stool, from which to discern and engage the culture of our lives, we can do no better than to improve our understanding of beauty, goodness, and truth. Study the Scriptures. Meditate on the life and work of Jesus Christ. Discover the many patterns of beauty at work in the books of Scripture and the creation. Look to the long heritage of Christian culture to see how our forebears in the faith thought about and pursued these cultural standards. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3.18).

The more we improve our understanding of beauty, goodness, and truth – the three foundational cultural standards – the more reliable will be our efforts at judging and engaging culture in ways that please God and bless our neighbors.

For reflection or discussion

1. “Beauty, goodness, and truth are nothing other than expressions of the character of God into time and creation, supremely, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian artists – such as Albrecht Dürer and Gerard Manley Hopkins – looked to the creation, as well as to Jesus, to discover the patterns of beauty which would define their own art. Centuries of Christians have taken their understanding of goodness from the teaching of God's Law and the example of Jesus Christ.” What can we learn about beauty, goodness, and truth from looking at Jesus?
2. What can we learn about these from observing the creation?
3. Would you like to gain more exposure to our Christian cultural heritage? How might a person do that?

4. Beauty, goodness, and truth are not *subjective* standards; they exist *objectively* because they exist in Christ. Yet everyone, even non-Christians, have *some* idea of beauty, goodness, and truth. Why do you suppose this is so? How can we use this “common ground” to work for better culture in our communities?

5. Do you think churches should do more to equip their people for engaging culture? Why or why not?

Next steps: Get with some friends to talk about beauty, goodness, and truth. Make some lists of things beautiful, good, and true. How can such “models” serve to improve your overall ability to judge and engage culture?

For prayer:

7 Three “Braces”

For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding and the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2.1-3

A humble platform

We are considering the platform from which we must judge and engage the culture of our lives in ways that please God and bless our neighbor.

And we must judge and engage culture, so we need a reliable platform on which to operate.

We do not all aspire to be professional or academic critics of culture. We seek not a university lectern or an academic’s throne on which to sit in judgment on the culture around us. We will be satisfied with a humble stool of three legs – beauty, goodness, and truth. We will make it our goal to improve our understanding of these ideas, especially as they all come to focus in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is all beauty, goodness, and truth personified. The better we learn Him, as He reveals Himself in Scripture and His providential work of creation, the sounder will be our judgment concerning culture matters, and the more effective our engagement of culture will be for the glory of God and the blessing of others.

Scripture, tradition, the Spirit

Three “braces” join the “legs” of our humble stool, to guide us in making the most of these primary criteria for judging culture. These are Scripture, the heritage of Christian culture, and the work of God’s Spirit in the world today.

We have perhaps already said enough about Scripture. We do believe that studying God’s Word can greatly clarify our understanding of culture and cultural concepts and standards, especially if we can bring all our studies around to shed light on the picture of Jesus presented throughout the Bible.

Of the vast heritage of Christian culture, alas, the great majority of Christians remain largely ignorant. We may perhaps be familiar with a few of the names – Dante, Bach, Milton, Hopkins, Wilberforce, Kuyper, King, and so forth – and at least a few of the many good works of culture such people produced.

But, in the main, the heritage of Christian culture is *terra incognita* for most Christians, and that in spite of the fact that a substantial trove of that heritage is available to us yet today in books, artifacts, and venues which are, with the Internet, accessible to practically every believer.

We can learn much about beauty, goodness, truth, and our Lord Jesus Christ as the embodiment of these, by reading the works, studying the art and literature, and listening to the music of our Christian forebears. If we’re serious about engaging culture from a consistently Christian posture, we will make the time for such study. Instead, most believers today seem to despise our cultural heritage. Consider the easy way we have, for the

most part, tossed the heritage of Christian hymnody and liturgy into the trash can of history. Who reads *The Divine Comedy* anymore? Or discusses a Bach cantata or Hopkins' remarkable "sprung rhythms" with his children?

There is much, much of beauty, goodness, and truth to be learned here, and we do well to make the study of Christianity's cultural heritage part of our own spiritual disciplines.

The Spirit at work today

Even today the Spirit of God is at work, showing us new insights to beauty, goodness, and truth through the work of Christian artists, poets, song writers, preachers, businessmen, philosophers, and more.

The books and journals are there; the websites beckon. God's Spirit is working to give us reliable examples of culture in many fields, which can help us in improving our own ability to judge and engage the culture of our everyday lives. But we need to apply ourselves to the task of understanding how God's Spirit is working in His people for cultural renewal today, or we'll miss an important "brace" in our approach to engaging culture

We can learn to appreciate beauty, treasure goodness, and stand for truth if we will study Scripture, appreciate our Christian heritage, and learn from those in whom the Spirit of God is working today. The dying culture of our day is crying out for renewal, and Christians through the centuries have proven more than adequate for just such a task. Will that be said of our generation of Christians as well?

For reflection or discussion

1. "We can learn to appreciate beauty, treasure goodness, and stand for truth if we will study Scripture, appreciate our Christian heritage, and learn from those in whom the Spirit of God is working today." Do you believe this is true? Why or why not? Suggest some ways you might begin to engage these resources more consistently:
2. Most Christians don't do much serious reading or study, especially not in our Christian cultural heritage. Does the local church have a responsibility here for transmitting our cultural heritage to its members? Why or why not?
3. It should be obvious that culture does not "naturally" improve in the direction of what is ennobling, decent, honorable, beautiful, and good. Why is this so? Can we expect this situation to change if Christians fail to engage culture in the ways we've been considering in this study?

4. What's the most important thing you've learned from these studies?

5. How do you intend to apply this lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Next steps: Which of the three "braces" of your "culture stool" do you most need to bolster — Scripture, Christianity's cultural heritage, or today's Spirit-filled cultural voices? Ask some Christian friends for advice in how to improve these areas.

For prayer:

Redeeming Culture

T. M. Moore

1 The Inevitability of Culture

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. Genesis 2.15

Creatures of culture

Human beings are creatures of culture. There's just no escaping the fact.

We're not the only creatures which engage in cultural activities, as we know that many creatures communicate through forms of language, build particular kinds of nests, make and use certain tools, and even sing, play, and dance.

But the "culture" which animals make and use can hardly be compared with the multifaceted, variegated, sophisticated, and ever-changing cultural activities of human beings. In fact, so far beyond comparison with the habits of animals are the cultural activities of men, that we reserve the very word, "culture," to refer to the activities of humans alone.

From the very beginning God intended humans to be creatures of culture. In order to instruct Adam and Eve concerning His will, God used intelligible language. In carrying out His will, we can imagine our first parents thinking creatively about the shape of the garden, the order and priority of their work, the tools that might be required, and much more.

Human beings are, and have been from the beginning, inescapably cultural. We may not like the culture in which we participate, but that can never be an excuse for denying or seeking to avoid cultural engagement, as we have seen. We were made for culture, and it is inevitable that we shall have it, in one form or another.

What is culture?

But what do we mean by "culture"? This word suggests many meanings, but I think we can outline a general definition that is broad enough to enfold everything that human beings think about under the heading of culture.

Culture consists of the artifacts, institutions, and conventions by which human beings define, sustain, and enrich their lives. Let's take a closer look at this definition.

Culture consists of "stuff." It is made up of *artifacts* – like computers, forks and spoons, melodies, literature, paintings, clothing, homes, and much, much more. Some of the artifacts we create are intended to make our lives a bit easier, or perhaps more productive. Others are designed simply to delight us, whether through the eye, the ear, or by participation – such as playing an instrument.

Culture also consists of *institutions* – schools, courts, political parties, forms of government, voluntary associations, churches, and so forth. Such institutions serve as repositories of values and organs of communal

action. We require them because, as institutions, bodies of people working together, they can accomplish more than what any of us might be able to do on our own.

Finally, culture consists of *conventions*, such as driving right, observing holidays, languages and dialects, artistic forms, and various types of manners and social protocols. Some of these conventions may be written down, but many of them have become so much a part of who we are that they are transmitted through the simple, everyday activities of life.

To define, sustain, and enrich

All such aspects of culture – all our artifacts, institutions, and conventions – are created as ways of *defining* who we are as a people, what we value or find delightful, and how we understand our way of life should be organized and conducted.

Therefore, our culture not only *defines* us, it also helps to *sustain* and *enrich* our lives, giving meaning, value, and enjoyment to our everyday experience. The fact that there are so many different kinds of culture throughout the world is a testimony to the many and varied interests which human beings express, and which, in turn, are a reflection of the image of the infinitely beautiful God in which we are made.

So culture is inevitable, and it has enormous potential to bring good into our lives.

But what happens when culture goes bad, when it turns against us and threatens to do us more harm than good? This is when we need to think about *renewing* culture and *redeeming* it according to God's original purpose for our lives.

For reflection or discussion

1. What comes to mind when you think of the word, "culture"? How do you think most people feel about culture and their involvement with it?
2. Why do we say that culture is inevitable? What is the relationship between culture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ?
3. In what ways does culture play a role in seeking the Kingdom of God?

4. How would you describe the state of your own “culture consciousness” at this time? That is, to what extent are you aware of your use of culture as an aspect of your life in the Kingdom of God?

5. What do you hope to gain from this brief study? What are your goals?

Next steps: How many artifacts, institutions, and conventions of culture can you identify in your daily life? Jot them down. Then begin to meditate on 1 Corinthians 10.31 and what it might imply for these.

Prayer:

2 The Gift of Culture

*Therefore He says, "When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And He gave gifts to men."* Ephesians 4.8

Gifts for every situation

Two aspects to Paul's use of this quote from Psalm 68.18 I find fascinating, and they relate to how we should understand culture and its use.

First, Paul applies this text to the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The "gifts" he mentions most probably refer, in the first instance, to the spiritual gifts by which believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, do the work of seeking and advancing the Kingdom of God.

But though these are "spiritual gifts" their use is not restricted to what we might think of as "spiritual activities" – whatever those are. The gifts of the Holy Spirit – of teaching, helping, administering, giving, and so forth – apply to every situation in which believers are seeking to advance the rule of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, which is the Kingdom of God.

Thus, we should expect to see these supernatural endowments come to expression in such everyday activities as working at a marriage, managing a home, carrying out our daily work, enjoying a quiet evening together, writing a poem or an email, or working in a political campaign.

Jesus Christ is Lord of all of life, and He has sent His followers, like salt, light, and leaven, into every nook and cranny of society and culture, fitted with special spiritual endowments from God, in order to bring renewal and transformation into a world darkened by unbelief and sin.

The presence of Christians in any particular cultural situation or activity should, therefore, ensure that a power for righteousness, peace, and joy will be at work there which otherwise that cultural arena might not know. The spiritual gifts God gives to His followers thus become *cultural resources* for creating and transforming the artifacts, institutions, and conventions of our lives, so that these can fulfill their potential to define, sustain, and enrich us and our neighbors.

Thus, by the operation of divine power in and through those who believe, the various forms of culture become themselves gifts of God to benefit the people He loves.

Gifts all around

But there is a second curious aspect to Paul's use of this quote from Psalm 68.18. Paul chose to quote, not the Hebrew text in this case, which reads "*receiving* gifts among men," but a version of the Septuagint version, which, in the mind of pre-Christian interpreters, seemed to make better sense of what the Hebrew intended.

So Paul uses "gave to men" rather than "receiving among men" because in his mind this Greek translation captured David's meaning more precisely. The text then goes on to read (in the ESV), "He gave gifts to men,

even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there” (emphasis added). God, in other words, has given gifts for making culture, not only to His redeemed people, but to all human beings, even those who despise Him!

And this is a very good thing, for if we had to depend on Christians to invent and perfect all the forms of culture we need, we’d still be waiting for things like computers, the Internet, and, of course, much, much more.

God gives human beings abundant cultural gifts and abilities – and since the day of Christ’s ascension, those endowments have been multiplied manifold over what the world knew in the days before the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Now, in giving human beings gifts for culture, we can be sure that, since He intended that His glory should dwell in the midst of their cultural activities, God wants those gifts used according to His truth, for the good of all His creatures, and as a reflection of His beauty, goodness, and truth in infinite and wondrous ways.

God has a purpose for human culture, but human beings have not always used their cultural gifts to honor God and benefit their neighbors. When culture departs from its God-given purposes, those who discern this must take up the task of renewing and redeeming culture to the glory of God.

For reflection or discussion:

1. Do you agree that culture is a gift from God? Why or why not?
2. Meditate on Matthew 25.14-30. How does this parable relate to the gift of culture?
3. If the cultural abilities of even unbelievers are gifts from God, then why is there so much culture that does not honor Him?
4. What would you say are the duties of all those who enjoy the gifts of culture?
5. How do you understand each of the following terms?

- Truth:
- Beauty:
- Goodness:

Next steps: If Christians regarded all aspects of their cultural lives as a gift from God, and an opportunity for glorifying Him, do you think the people we encounter each week would notice? What would they notice? Talk with some Christian friends about these questions.

For prayer:

3 The Corruption of Culture

And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son – Enoch. Genesis 4.17

Something culturally wrong

Human beings are made for culture. They take to it like ducks to water. We see this from the opening pages of the story of human history as this is presented in the Bible.

Here is a religious ceremony, there brothers converse among their cultivated fields, a city is founded, tools and music and animal husbandry appear, a poem with a catchy rhythm pops into the mind of its composer and is recited to his wives.

The gifts of God for making culture are already beginning to proliferate among the earliest human beings, but there is something very desperately wrong with this picture.

The people in the vignettes mentioned above – Cain and his descendants – do not seem to understand the proper use of culture. Cain's offering of a sacrifice to God appears to have been either a self-serving or merely perfunctory act, for that cultural activity was rejected by God. His conversation with his brother, which on previous occasions may have been about who would do which work among the crops on that day, was on *this* day constructed as a ruse to lure Abel out into the field, in order that Cain might kill him, perhaps with one of the implements made for the cultivation of the fields. A city is built, but it bears a man's name, to honor him, not God. Industry and agribusiness appear, but solely for advancing the wealth and power of a particular family, one of whom, puffed up with his cultural achievements, killed at least one man for slighting him in some way, then wrote a poem about his deed and recited it to his wives, as a boast and a warning.

Culture off the tracks

Shortly after the fall into sin, culture is off the tracks. Human beings are engaging in all manner of cultural activities, and a good deal of what they are doing appears to have nothing to do with honoring God and carrying out His true, good, and beautiful purposes on earth. God's gifts of culture-making are obviously at work here, but their use has become corrupted by mankind's rebellion against Him.

Following the fall into sin, culture quickly became a means for gaining advantage over others, building strong tribal and national identities, and suppressing or enslaving those whose cultural achievements did not match up. Every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts, being only evil continually, was bent on making and using culture in merely self-indulgent ways, and this, as we know, ultimately provoked the judgment of God in the form of the flood against men and their corrupt cultures.

The entrance of sin into the experience of men could not *but* affect their culture. When men became a law unto themselves, they projected those self-serving ways on every aspect of their lives. They considered that culture was a tool for defining, sustaining, and enriching themselves at everybody else's expense, or, at least, without regard for the needs or interests of others.

It was every man for himself in those early days of culture-making, and this is a condition which, because of the persistence of sin in the human situation, we continue to experience even to this day.

When culture becomes corrupt

Culture becomes corrupt when it is employed according to the whims and passions of men rather than the purposes and standards of God. We hardly need to argue that much of contemporary culture falls into this category. Not only are the will and ways of God ignored and flouted, but many aspects of contemporary culture are in all-out rebellion against God and His rule.

This situation demonstrates the power of sin to corrupt culture, so that it becomes, in many ways, a vehicle for lies, a source of evil, and a cause of ugliness of various kinds. When culture falls into this sorry state, it is the duty of those who perceive this condition to do whatever they can to redress it. Christians are the salt, light, and leaven of the world; it is our duty to take every thought, and all of culture, captive for obedience to Jesus Christ, to *redeem* culture from the destructive powers of sin and rebellion, so that it can be renewed for the purposes of God and His glory.

For reflection and discussion

1. What would you look for as indicators that a culture was becoming corrupt?
2. How can you see that corruption tends to spread throughout a culture, and does not merely stay in the arena where it first made entry into a culture?
3. What is the Christian's duty toward the corruption he or she perceives within a culture?
4. How can Christians help to protect themselves against the corrupting powers of culture?

5. Given the way sin can corrupt culture, why is it important that Christians be involved in seeking to redeem culture?

Next steps: In what ways can you see the sinful effects of the fall on the culture of our day? What is the role of the Church in preparing church members to recognize the state of culture and work to redeem it? Talk with a pastor or church leader about these questions.

For prayer:

4 The Power of Culture

“Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the LORD scattered them from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Genesis 11.7, 8

A name for themselves

The episode of the Tower of Babel demonstrates why it is so important that those who perceive the corruption in their culture do whatever they can to redeem and renew culture according to the purposes of God.

In this brief story we catch a glimpse of how powerful the effects of culture can be on the lives of those who participate in it.

The people of the earth had journeyed as one to a place in the land of Shinar. We do not know what their population was at this time, but it must have been fairly small, since the flood was only a few generations in their past at this point. The people all shared the same culture and language, so it must have been fairly easy for them to hang together as they migrated from the east looking for some place to settle.

In the plain in Shinar they determined to make their stand. There a consensus was reached that they should build a city and, in the middle of that city, a tower, apparently as a focus of their religious devotion. They would employ all their available cultural skills at this task, with the declared objective of making “a name for themselves” and to keep from being dispersed over all the earth.

The city and tower would provide the strong identity and the communal rituals and protocols that would give the people a sense of significance and purpose. The problem of course, was that these two powerful cultural achievements would serve to orient and lead the people in a direction completely contrary to the good purposes of God. Rather than seek to establish the name of God over all the earth, the people in the plain of Shinar would make a name for themselves in one familiar and convenient locale.

An intervention of grace

The Lord was able to see the trouble in this. If the people of the earth succeeded in this project, they would only go on to do other and more things designed to exalt their own prestige and power (v. 6). The results, over time, would ultimately be the same as those which occasioned the flood: Men would use their cultural forms, and the power those forms accrued for them, to flout the will of God and to oppress and enslave others for the sake of their own names and agendas.

Culture can be a powerful tool in the hands of the few for the corruption and oppression of the many.

So God determined to interrupt their designs and move the people of the earth back onto something that more resembled His agenda for them. He would bring this building project to an end, break up the monolithic social structure of Shinar, and disperse the peoples over all the earth, precisely as He planned.

And all He did in order to accomplish this dramatic change was to introduce the cultural *convention* of new languages.

The peoples' ability to understand one another now hopelessly confused, they sought out those with whom they could communicate and began to migrate away from the plain of Shinar toward the far ends of the earth. Their project for making a name for themselves was abandoned, and the hubris with which they essayed such a venture was appropriately chastened.

In spite of their rebellion against God, His grace prevailed – through the medium of a cultural innovation – to offer humankind an opportunity to return to His appointed course.

The challenge to the believer

God used a transformation of culture in order to redeem and reform a cultural situation that was spiraling out of control. Culture can be a powerful resource for helping people to move more deliberately toward fulfilling the divine purpose for their lives, but it may require being redeemed before it can serve that glorious end. For this reason, we must not take culture for granted, and we must not simply leave culture to the corroding and destructive effects of human sin, pride, and self-indulgence.

Rather, each of us needs to become more aware of the opportunities presented to us each day for bringing the beauty, goodness, and truth of God into the cultural arenas of our lives. Believers have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16), and He is working to make all things new (Rev. 22.5). As we learn to think and act with the mind of Christ in the cultural opportunities before us each day, we can expect to see some of that newness come to light, overcoming the hubris of men and declaring the excellencies of our God.

For reflection or discussion

1. What are some aspects of contemporary culture that you would point to as examples of the power of culture?
2. Why does culture exert such influence over people? That is, how does the power of culture work on our minds, hearts, values, and lives?
3. The printing press is an example of a cultural change that influenced the entire course of human history. What are some other examples of powerful cultural innovations that have changed whole societies?

4. Is it possible that small cultural changes – in the lives of individuals, or even in local communities – could have such powerful effects? Explain:

5. Meditate on Ephesians 5:15-17. Apply the teaching of this text to the Christian's use of culture:

Next steps: Meditate on Romans 12.21, 2 Corinthians 10.3-5, and Revelation 22.5. What do you think it will take for you to become an agent of cultural change within your own sphere of influence? Talk with some Christian friends about this question.

For prayer:

5 Early Redemptive Achievements

“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world...” Matthew 5.13, 14

Lighting the way

In spite of humankind’s rebellious and disastrous use of culture in those early days of the human race, God did not give up on this project, for which He has made and gifted human beings. He is a God of grace, after all, and His grace is, indeed, greater than all our sins.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments God demonstrated an appreciation of culture and showed the way for His people to renew culture and its power for good. The many examples of culture, created and employed to the glory of God and the benefit of people, which we find throughout the Bible, are there, in part, to light the way for God’s people in every culture to work for the redemption of culture in all its forms.

Let’s reflect on just a few of the early redemptive achievements which God’s people made in the area of culture.

The Law of God

Consider, first of all, the Law of God.

Here is a body of law, a code of civil statutes, unlike anything the ancient world had seen. While there is some overlap between the Law of God and the law codes of other ancient cultures – a fact explainable because of all people being made in the image of God – still, the commandments and statutes of ancient Israel are without parallel or precedent.

Here we find encoded an approach to living together in society which is designed to preserve justice, promote neighbor-love, and maximize individual freedom and productivity. So marvelous is the Law of God in fact, that God told His people to expect that the surrounding nations, upon seeing this Law at work, would wonder and applaud the greatness of this cultural achievement (Deut. 4.1-8).

Law is a *convention* common to all human societies, and the Law of God remains today the benchmark of justice and social order.

Ritual and the arts

Next, consider the way that the religion of ancient Israel was able to redeem religious ritual and the arts for the benefit of men and the glory of God.

Every society in those days offered sacrifices and conducted ceremonies for their gods. None was so clearly focused on purifying a people from sin and enhancing their relationship with God as that system of worship which God gave to Israel.

What’s more, in the work of Bezalel and Oholiab, David and Asaph, and Solomon and Hiram, we see examples of the many ways that true religion can affect the practice of architecture and use of such arts as singing, sculpture, tapestry-making, and literary composition. Rather than fear that culture might actually corrupt true

religion, God showed His people how to use culture to express their faith in ways that brought Him honor and glory through the *institution* of religion.

The Bible

The creation of the Bible as a literary work of art is but another example of God's determination to redeem culture and make it serve His purposes. It is perhaps easy for us to lose sight of the fact that the Bible is a cultural *artifact* and that, as such, it has exerted tremendous influence and power over peoples and cultures from the very beginning. No single book, and no collection of books or authors, has had such a widespread effect for good on the course of human history as the Bible which God brought into being through His Spirit working in His people.

The Spirit of God

Finally, the pouring-out of God's Spirit on the Day of Pentecost – a kind of reversing of the curse of Babel – launched a universal power for cultural transformation into the societies of men which has been bringing the blessings of culture to people for nearly 2,000 years. Under the direction and in the power of God's Spirit, Christian people have redeemed culture in a wide range of areas and throughout the cultures of the world, acting as salt, light, and leaven to roll back cultural corruption and begin making all things new in Jesus Christ.

Corrupt cultures can be redeemed. New cultures can be created. Those who believe in God and embrace His Word have shown that we do not simply need to hold our noses and take a deep breath in the face of corrupt cultures. We can change culture. We can redeem culture. And it is the desire and plan of God that His people should do so.

For reflection or discussion

1. Give some examples of cultural artifacts used in the Bible to honor God and advance His purposes:
2. Give some examples of cultural institutions mentioned in the Bible which honored God and served His purposes:
3. Give some examples of cultural conventions mentioned in the Bible which honored God and served His purposes:
4. In what ways does the Bible encourage us to think about using culture for God's glory?

5. What are some obstacles we will need to overcome if we're going to be more consistent and effective in the work of redeeming culture?

Next steps: Think of the culture in which you are engaged week-in and week-out. Where can you see a need for cultural renewal and redemption? Is it possible God might want you to be an agent of cultural change in these arenas? Talk with a church leader or pastor about these questions.

For prayer:

6 Culture at Our Fingertips

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10.31

Engaging culture

The idea of redeeming culture can be somewhat daunting. We may perhaps think of culture in terms that are so broad and complex that the idea of changing culture or redeeming it for the glory of God seems quite beyond the scope of our abilities.

But if we keep in mind that culture is nothing more than the artifacts, institutions, and conventions by which people define, sustain, and enrich their lives, taking on the task of redeeming culture becomes rather more manageable.

After all, every one of us, every day of our lives, is engaged in culture. We have culture virtually at our fingertips every moment of every day. The question we must seek to work out in all our cultural activities is, “How can I use this culture in such a way as to glorify God Who gave it to me?”

Signaling the world

Paul says “whatever you do” – even down to such everyday things as taking a meal – do it in order to glorify God.

Apparently there are ways of using culture – our table manners, language, style of dress, way of working, how we drive our car and care for our homes, the use we make of TV and films, the emails we write, the phone calls in which we become involved, and all the rest of our culture – there are ways of using such everyday things that will allow us to signal to the world around us that we are aware of an obligation in such cultural activities that extends beyond our own puny selfish interests.

We seek the glory of God in our use of culture.

Guidelines

Paul provides a few guidelines in the verses that follow our text.

We glorify God in our lives when we try to “give no offense” to others in the way we use culture (v. 32). We need to be conscious of the people around us and sensitive to their needs and concerns. Our use of culture should not become a cause for them to take offense at the ways we engage our cultural activities.

Instead, Paul says we should “try to please everyone” in the things we do (v. 33). This doesn’t mean that we become “people-pleasers” rather than pleasers of God. It simply means that, in our use of culture, we’re intentionally thinking about ways to do good to others. We strive for excellence, efficiency, and a joyful disposition in all our cultural activities. We don’t enter into cultural activities merely for our own enrichment, but we’re part of a community, a family, a neighborhood, a staff, or a team, and we have to seek their wellbeing and edification in all we do.

Paul also seems to indicate that our use of culture should reflect our primary concern for communicating the Gospel to the people around us. As far as possible, in all our cultural activities, we should strive to improve the experience of salvation of our Christian friends and to encourage our unsaved neighbors to consider the promises of the Gospel for their own lives (v. 33).

Finally, Paul tells us simply to “be imitators” of him, as he was an imitator of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11.1). Paul was a man with a mission, and he saw everything he did from that perspective and with that emphasis. He made the best use of his time; invested his speech in reaching others for Christ and building up the saints in the life of faith; avoided anything that might cause others to stumble; used his resources and cultural skills for the benefit of others; and sought the progress of the Kingdom at all times. If we follow the example of Paul, it’s a pretty good bet that our cultural activities will become more focused and more fruitful for the cause of Christ.

It is possible for us, in all our involvement with culture, to bring glory to God, to declare and demonstrate to the people around us that we are committed to a realm of truth, beauty, and goodness which transcends the bounds of the secular and relativist order. And if we can learn to use culture like this, then we’ll be well on our way to redeeming whole segments of culture for the purposes of Christ and His Kingdom.

For reflection or discussion

1. Suggest some ways that a Christian might prepare each day in order to make the most of his or her cultural opportunities for the glory of God:
2. Do you agree that it is possible to use “everyday culture” in ways that glorify God? Can you give an example or two from your own experience?
3. How does 1 Peter 3.15 relate to 1 Corinthians 10.31 where the question of culture is concerned?

4. Can you think of some areas of everyday culture use where you would like to become more self-consciously involved in using your culture for God's glory? How might you begin to do that?

5. How can Christians help one another in this high calling of redeeming culture?

Next steps: Would you say that you are following Paul's guidelines in all your cultural activities? Can you see any area where you can begin to improve? What might you do differently? Talk with a Christian friend about these questions.

For prayer:

7 Standards for Culture

*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living! Psalm 27.13*

Culture for the glory of God

We have seen that culture is a gift from God, an indispensable resource for bringing fullness and blessing into human lives. Culture has power to accomplish much good, but it can become corrupted by the effects of sin and, if we're not careful, actually end up harming rather than benefiting us.

But just as culture can become corrupt, so also it can be redeemed, laid hold of and refashioned in order to satisfy the purposes of God for good. This work of redeeming culture falls on the shoulders of those who know their God and have accepted the calling to live for His glory in every aspect of their lives, including their cultural activities.

In order to be consistent and effective in this effort, we'll need some standards to guide us in the use we make of culture. Psalm 27 draws together three ideas which, because they derive from the being and character of God, can serve as effective guidelines for us in the work of redeeming culture. These are the ideas of truth, beauty, and goodness.

Truth

"Teach me Your way, O LORD," David prayed in verse 11. He understood that the *truth of God* defined the proper path for every aspect of his life.

Now, David did not always adhere to that truth, but he recognized his failings and shortcomings when confronted with the truth and repented and reformed his life accordingly.

In all our making and use of culture we must be taught of God and guided by His truth. Culture cannot become for us simply a matter of personal preference. There's more to engaging culture than just our taste in music, manners, or merchandise. We are disciples of the One Who is the Truth, and *He* must define the choices and practices that guide our cultural activities, as He teaches and leads us by His Word and Spirit.

Beauty

David also prayed, "One *thing* I have desired of the LORD,/That will I seek:/That I may dwell in the house of the LORD/All the days of my life,/To behold the beauty of the LORD..." (v. 4). The Lord our God is *beautiful* in His being, attributes, purposes, and works. Everything about God radiates glory, majesty, and strength. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, as Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 3, is to be transformed by His beauty so that the glory of God comes to expression in all the details of our lives, whatever we do.

We can learn about the beauty of the Lord through His Word in Scripture and creation, including the cultural works of our Christian forebears. Our cultural practices can be beautiful so that they represent the very

character and purpose of God, but we must seek the Lord in His beauty if this is to be the case. Beauty is not merely in the eye of the beholder; beauty is in the eye of him who beholds the face of God (v.8; cf. 2 Cor. 4.6).

Goodness

Finally, David declared that he fully believed to see the *goodness* of the Lord in his own time and culture. The goodness of the Lord relates to what God originally intended for His creation, and for the societies of men, before the disaster of sin set everything on a course of corruption, decay, and death. Where the goodness of the Lord exists, His original, pure and sinless purposes are being realized. Justice obtains, love abounds, and human beings and all creation flourish. As followers of Jesus Christ we have been redeemed in order to do good works, and this pertains to all our making and use of culture.

Truth, goodness, and beauty: These are not ideas that originated with Greek philosophers. These three standards for life and culture appear over and over in the Scriptures, and they challenge us to learn what each of them requires of us in following Jesus for the redemption of culture.

The time is long past for Christians to cease participating mindlessly and selfishly in whatever forms of culture the unbelieving world might cough up next. We are called to bring the truth, beauty, and goodness of God into the everyday lives of people and societies all over the world, and we do this by taking seriously our calling to engage and redeem culture for the glory of God.

For reflection or discussion

1. How do you expect your reading and study of Scripture to affect your involvement in culture from this point forward?
2. Suggest some ways that you, like David, might contemplate the beauty of God in a more consistent and more meaningful way. How might Psalm 19.1-4 help you in this?
3. “Goodness” is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5.22, 23). It is also a characteristic of the Law of God (Rom. 7.12). How should each of these factor into your work of redeeming culture?
4. What are the primary lessons you’ve gained from this study?

5. How do you think your own involvement with culture will change from this point forward?

Next steps: How might you improve your understanding of truth, beauty, and goodness? Why should you do so? Talk with a pastor or church leader about these questions.

For prayer: