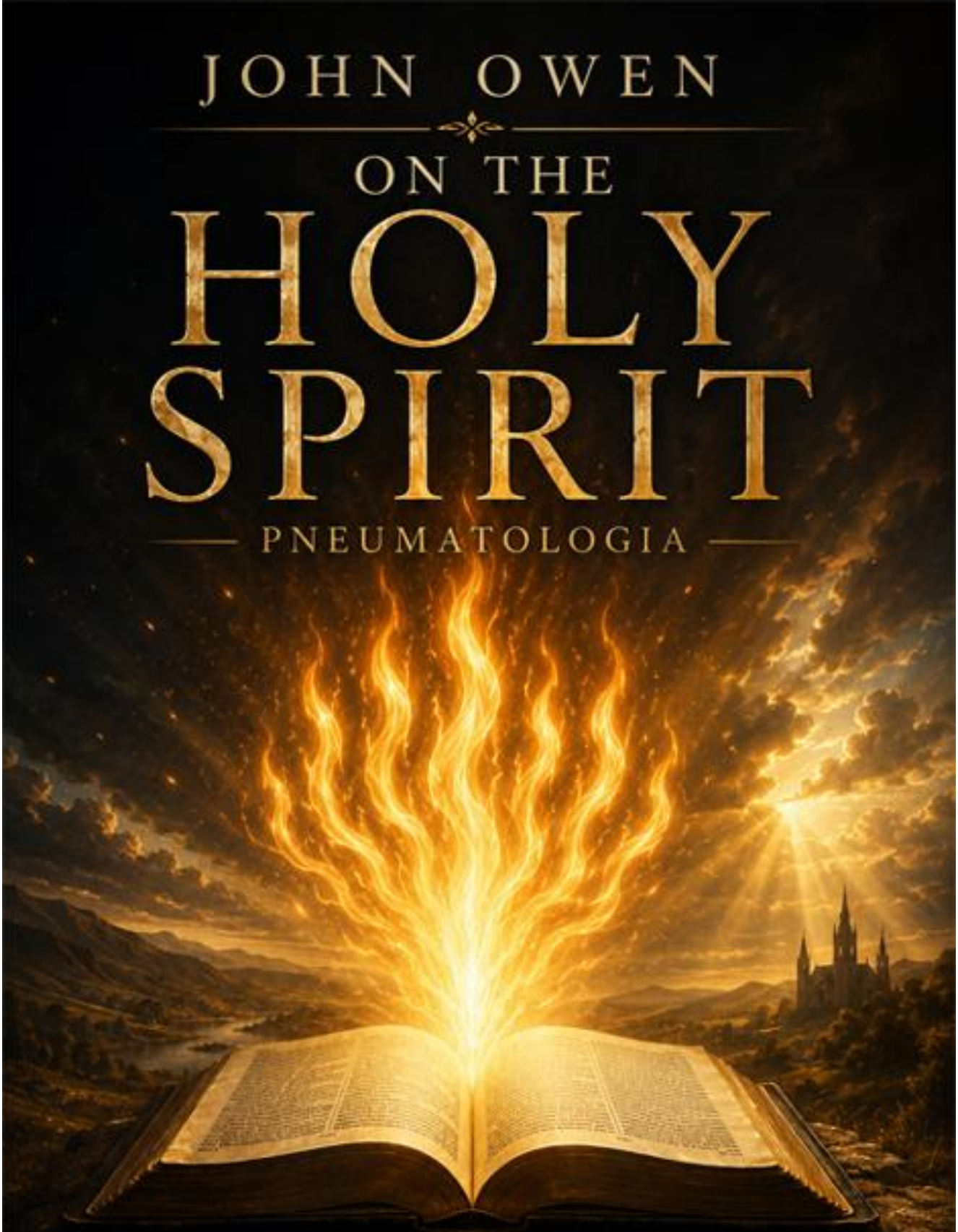
JOHN OWEN

ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

PNEUMATOLOGIA



A Treatise on the Person, Deity, and Work of the Holy Spirit

Part Two

Books VI–IX

Modernized

On the Holy Spirit (Pneumatologia)

Part II Books VI Through IX

by John Owen

Monergism Books

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Contents

1. Title Page

2. Editor's Note

Book VI. Part I. The Reason of Faith.

3. Book VI. Part I. The Reason of Faith.

4. Prefatory note.

5. Preface.

6. Chapter I. The Work of the Holy Ghost in the illumination of the minds of men

7. Chapter II. What it means to infallibly believe that the Scripture is the Word of God

8. Chapter III. Various convincing external arguments for divine revelation.

9. Chapter IV. Moral certainty, as the result of external arguments, is insufficient.

10. Chapter V. Divine revelation itself is the only foundation and reason of faith.

11. Chapter VI. The nature of divine revelations

12. Chapter VII. Inferences from the whole — Some objections answered.

13. Appendix to Book VI — Part I.

Book VI. Part II. Understanding the Mind of God.

14. Book VI. Part II. Understanding the Mind of God.

15. Prefatory note.

16. Analysis.

17. Preface.

18. Chapter I. Usurpation by Rome of the Interpretation of Scripture

19. Chapter II. The general assertion confirmed with testimonies of the Scripture

20. Chapter III. Other testimonies pleaded in confirmation of the same truth.

21. Chapter IV. The work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our mind

22. Chapter V. Causes of ignorance of the mind of God

23. Chapter VI. The Scripture as a means of sacred illumination

24. Chapter VII. The right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture

25. Chapter VIII. Disciplinarian means for the interpretation of the Scripture

26. Chapter IX. Ecclesiastical Helps in the interpretation of the Scripture.

Book VII. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer.

27. Book VII. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer.

28. Prefatory note.

29. Analysis.

30. Preface to the reader.

31. Chapter I. The use of prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit in it.

32. Chapter II. Zec 12.10 explained and vindicated.

33. Chapter III. Gal 4.6 explained and vindicated.

34. Chapter IV. The nature of prayer — Rom 8.26 explained and vindicated.

35. Chapter V. The work of the Holy Spirit as to the matter of prayer.

36. Chapter VI. What the due manner of prayer consists in.

37. Chapter VII. The nature of prayer in general; its forms — Eph 6.18

38. Chapter VIII. The duty of external prayer by virtue of a spiritual gift, explained and vindicated.

39. Chapter IX. Duties inferred from the preceding discourse.

40. Chapter X. Of mental prayer as pretended to by some in the Church of Rome.

41. Chapter XI. Spiritual ability in prayer, in opposition to prescribed forms of prayer

Book VIII. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 1.

42. Book VIII. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 1.

43. Prefatory note.

44. Analysis of the first treatise.

45. Analysis of the second treatise.

46. The Preface.

47. A DISCOURSE — OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A COMFORTER.

48. Chapter I. The Holy Ghost the comforter of the church by way of office

49. Chapter II. General properties of the office of a comforter.

50. Chapter III. To whom the Holy Spirit is promised and given as a comforter

51. Chapter IV. Inhabitation of the Spirit is the first thing promised.

52. Chapter V. How the Holy Spirit acts as an Unction

53. Chapter VI. The Spirit is a seal, and how.

54. Chapter VII. The Spirit is an earnest, and how.

55. The Application of the Foregoing Discourse.

Book IX. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 2.

56. Book IX. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 2.

57. A DISCOURSE — OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

58. Chapter I. Spiritual gifts, their names and meaning.

59. Chapter II. Differences between spiritual gifts and saving grace.

60. Chapter III. Of extraordinary gifts and offices; first, of offices.

61. Chapter IV. Extraordinary spiritual gifts, 1Cor 12.4-11.

62. Chapter V. The origin, duration, use, and end, of extraordinary spiritual gifts.

63. Chapter VI. Of ordinary gifts of the Spirit

64. Chapter VII. Of spiritual gifts enabling the ministry

65. Chapter VIII. Of the gifts of the Spirit with respect to doctrine, worship, and rule.

Title Page

ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Pneumatologia)

By *John Owen*

(1616-1683)

A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT

CONTINUED**:**

EMBRACING THE CONSIDERATION OF

HIS WORK AS THE SPIRIT OF ILLUMINATION, OF SUPPLICATION,

OF CONSOLATION, AND AS THE IMMEDIATE AUTHOR OF ALL

SPIRITUAL OFFICES AND GIFTS.

PART II

Books VI through IX

If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded,

though one rose from the dead. — Luk 16.31.

London:

1677.

from

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edited by

WILLIAM H. GOOLD

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Modernized, formatted, corrected, and annotated (in blue)

© by William H. Gross Mar 2011

Except where indicated,

Scripture in the footnotes is taken from the New King James version,

Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1982.

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CONTENTS

Editor's Note

This is a restatement and simplification of John Owen's original work, but not a paraphrase. Its purpose is to make it more accessible to a modern audience of believers, not just theologians. You may reproduce the text so long as you do not change it or sell it to anyone. This restriction is placed on it so that the propagation of any errors in the modernized language is limited. If someone rephrases my rephrasing, the treatise will quickly degenerate into a misstatement rather than a restatement of Owen's work.

What changes have been made?

The old English wording has been modernized, so that "thee" and "thou" are now "you" and "yours." American spelling has been largely employed (labor instead of labour). Inline scripture references may be superscripted to aid readability. Additional references are superscripted in blue. Roman numerals were changed to Arabic and corrected as needed. The difficult structure and syntax were simplified. Sentences in many cases were split into several sentences for ease of reading. Parallelism has been employed to

maintain rhythm and clarity. The word "peculiar" is variously rendered "particular", "unique", "special," or "specific," depending on the context. Unreferenced pronouns and "understood" words have been made explicit. Now, Owen may have left personal pronouns ambiguous to reflect the mystery of the Godhead; but it was more obscure than mysterious. The passive voice is often changed to active. Duplicated texts, digressions not affecting the content, and alternate phrasings within the same sentence, have been removed for easier comprehension. Little-used words have either been annotated or replaced with simpler ones. Owen's wordiness has been reduced where possible. Formatting has also been revised (paragraph and page breaks, bullet points, etc.).

There are **two unusual uses of language** that have been retained in the text. The first is Owen's repeated use of "afterward" — "it will be fully explained *afterward*." He doesn't mean at some unspecified time later in the book. He means it in a sequential and orderly sense. He will first handle the topic at hand, and then get to the other aspect immediately "afterward."

The second unusual use of language involves the words "act, actings, actual, and actually." He uses the transitive form; we use the intransitive prepositional form. We say that we "act *in* faith," or we "act *under* grace," and the Spirit imparts the grace that we act under. But Owen says that the Holy Spirit "acts grace" in us, and we "act faith" (rather than "act out our faith"). *Actings* are repeated acts of this kind; *actual* and *actually* are the proper adjectival and adverb forms of "act" (whereas today we use those forms to mean *real* and *really*). Owen describes a God-given "principle" – not a value, but an ability or a compelling power in us — that we *act*, or ***actuate,*** according to its purposes. We *act* the graces that He communicates to us by this principle. So, the Spirit imparts this principle to us, employing

it to effect its purposes, using its real power in and through us, to produce its intended effects. And we freely participate by *acting it* — i.e., by putting that principle into gracious and holy *action* using our regenerated faculties. But in some instances, "acted" was changed to "moved," to be less distracting.

Language today continues to deteriorate as visual and auditory media replace written media. So Goold's mid-19th century *prefatory* and *analytical notes*, have also been modernized to ensure they are more readily understood. Original notes are in **black**, some ending with "— Ed." My notes are in **blue**, some ending with "— WHG." All page number references are the original page numbers of the 1850-53 edition, provided intra-text.

Latin, Greek, and Hebrew phrases have either been removed from the body of the text (where they were more of a distraction than a help), or Anglicized with the Strong's number (NT:xxxx or OT:xxxxx). Some required clarifying text to make the point explicit. But Owen's full argument, supporting text, and style remain, as do William Goold's footnotes in their original languages. If you would like the digitized 1853 edition, with appendices cross-referencing both the Scriptures and original language used in the text, please consult CCEL's edition here:

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/pneum.html.

My aim is not to preserve Owen's text, but his teaching. It would be a shame if a modern audience didn't benefit from his labors because his language was too complex, archaic, or arcane to grasp. As with each of these restatements, I hope this one makes it more accessible to you, bringing home the wonder and importance of the doctrines of the Holy Spirit that Dr. Owen drew from Scripture, and vividly explains here.

There are few works on the Holy Spirit that have not been influenced by the Holiness movement of the 1800s, or the Charismatic movement of the 1920s. And there are few if any scholarly works outside those movements, that haven't drawn on this particular work of Dr. Owen to bring balance back to our view of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Please read William Goold's *Prefatory Note* to understand where this treatise fits with regard to Quakers and Quietism, which was just then arising.

Owen had the same objections to dry rationalism that Jonathan Edwards later expressed in his treatise on *Religious Affections* (1746). Yet both men objected as well to the unfounded emotionalism that was rampant in their day — the term used then was "enthusiastic" or "enthusiasm." They weren't decrying passionate belief. Rather, they insisted that our passion must be born, provoked, and enlarged only by God's truth. Both extremes, cold intellectualism and wild enthusiasm, remain evident in our own day; and so the balance that Owen provides here is still greatly needed, and it will be useful to every believer.

Over the past 350 years, scholars have improved little upon Dr. Owen's labors. He gave glory to God by relying solely on the authority of Scripture for the things which he taught, as the contents of this treatise will amply demonstrate. It is a profound and wonderful work: I pray that you may enjoy and be edified by it.

As you'll see in Goold's *Prefatory Note*, this second part of Pneumatologia is a seminal work, certainly among reformed theologians. "It is the first recognition of the experiential evidence of Christianity ...distinctly and formally recognizing its existence and value." You will find Owen at his most powerful and poetic, especially his descriptions of delighting in God, pages 291-293, and meditating on His excellencies, pages 319-322 (book

vii, chaps. vi, ix). In book ix, chap. vii, there are echoes of Thomas Hooker's *Summe of Church Discipline* (1648), as Owen describes the gift of the ministry, with its offices and duties.

William H. Gross

www.onthewing.org Mar 2011

Book VI. Part I. The Reason of Faith.

Monergism Books

Book VI. Part I. The Reason of Faith.

OR,

AN ANSWER TO THAT INQUIRY, "WHY WE BELIEVE THE SCRIPTURE IS THE WORD OF GOD;"

WITH

THE CAUSES AND NATURE OF THAT FAITH WITH WHICH WE DO SO:

IN WHICH

THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE HOLY SCRIPTURE IS BELIEVED TO BE THE

WORD OF GOD WITH DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL FAITH ARE DECLARED AND

VINDICATED.

By John Owen, D.D.

If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded,

though one rose from the dead. — Luk 16.31.

London: 1677.

Prefatory note.

The subject of this treatise belongs to the office of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the minds of believers. It is the first part of what may be regarded as the sixth book in the work of our author on the dispensation and operations of the Spirit, and it is occupied with an answer to the question, On what grounds, or for what reason, do we believe that the Scripture is the word of God? When it was published, the novel views of the Friends, [1] to whom Owen frequently in his work on the Spirit alludes, had become extensively known. Barclay's famous "*Apology for the True Christian Divinity*" had just appeared, in which their views received the advantage of a scientific treatment and formal exhibition. The essential principle of the system is "the inward light" ascribed to every man, consequent upon a particular tenet, according to which the operation of the Holy Spirit in his office of illumination is universal — so universal, that even where the facts of the gospel are utterly unknown, as in heathen countries, this light exists in every man; and by due submission to its guidance, he would be saved. How far this notion was simply a mistaken recoil to an opposite extreme

from the high views of ecclesiastical prerogative which certain divines of the Church of England were fond of urging, is an inquiry scarcely within our province. It is an instructive fact, however, that mysticism, in claiming a special in-migration for every man, manifests not too remote an affinity with the modern skepticism that admits the inspiration of Scripture, but only in a sense that makes inspiration common to all authorship. However wide and vital the discrepancy may be in other respects, between the mystic and the sceptic, in this principle they seem as one; and to some extent, they are also as one in the practical tendencies it engenders, such as the disparagement of the Scriptures as an objective rule of faith and life. The Scriptures, according to the Friends, are only "a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit," or in other words, to the inward light.

In opposition to such principles, the authority, sufficiency, and infallibility, of the Scriptures, were ably proved by many writers of the Church of England; their services in this department are freely acknowledged in this treatise. Somewhat rationalistic in their spirit, however, and driven perhaps to a greater rationalism of tone by the fanatical excesses which they sought to rebuke, they stated the question in terms that superseded the necessity of supernatural influence in order to produce saving faith in the divine word. Even such a writer as Tillotson [2] speaks vaguely about "the principles of natural religion" governing all our reasonings about the evidence and interpretation of revealed truth. If Owen, therefore, affirmed the necessity of the Spirit for the dual credence of revelation, he might be confounded with "the professors of the inward light;" and he was actually charged by divines of the class to which we have alluded, with this and kindred errors. If, on the other hand, he affirmed the competency of the external evidences of revelation to produce a conviction

of its divine authority, it might be insinuated or fancied that he was overlooking the work of the spirit as the source of faith. It is his object to show that, in truth, he was committed to neither extreme. While external arguments deserve and must be allowed their proper weight, the faith by which we receive Scripture must be the same in origin and essence as the faith by which we receive the truths contained in it. This description of faith implies the affectual illumination of the Holy Spirit. And in this illumination, there is no special and internal testimony, equivalent to inspiration or to an immediate revelation from God, to each believer personally. The Spirit is the *efficient cause* by which faith is implanted; but not the objective ground on which our faith rests. The objective ground or reason of faith, according to our author, is "the authority and veracity of God, revealing themselves *in* the Scripture and *by* it;" and Scripture must be received for its own sake, as the word of God, apart from external arguments and authoritative testimony. The grounds on which it is thus to be received, resolve themselves into what is now known by the designation of *the experiential evidence* in favor of Christianity — the renewing and sanctifying effect of divine truth on the mind. It might be objected that, if the Spirit is requisite to appreciate the force of the Christian evidence, so as to acquire true and proper faith in Scripture as the word of God, then men who do not enjoy spiritual enlightenment would be free from any obligation to receive it as divine. The treatise is fitly closed by a brief but satisfactory reply to this and similar objections.

It has sometimes been questioned if Owen, with all his excellencies and gifts, has any claim to be regarded as an original thinker. This treatise of itself substantiates such a claim in his behalf. It is the first recognition of the experiential evidence of Christianity — that great branch in the varied

evidences of our faith to which the bulk of plain Christians, unable to overtake or even comprehend the voluminous authorship on the subject of the external evidences, stand indebted for the clearness and strength of their religious convictions. It could not be the first discovery of this evidence, for its nature implies that it had been in operation ever since revelation dawned on the race; but Owen has the merit of first distinctly and formally recognizing its existence and value. He seems to have been quite aware himself, of the freshness and importance of the line of thought on which he had entered. For anxious to clear his argument, he has supplied an abstract and analysis of it in the appendix, and accompanied it with some testimonies from various authors in confirmation of the premises on which his conclusions rest. The treatise was published in 1677, without any division into chapters. We borrow a division of this sort from a subsequent edition, by which the steps in the reasoning are indicated. — Ed.

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1. Quakers are members of the Religious Society of Friends; and so "Friends" and "Quakers" mean the same thing.
2. John Tillotson (1630-1694) – Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury from 1691 to 1694.

Preface.

Having added a brief account of the design, order, and method of the ensuing discourse in an appendix at the close of it, I will not detain the reader here with their proposal. Yet, a few things remain which I judge it necessary to mind him of. Whoever he may be, I am sure we will not differ about the weight of the argument in hand. For whether it is the truth we contend for or otherwise, it will not be denied that the determination of it, and the settling of the minds of men about it, are of the highest concern to them. But because so much has been written on this subject lately by others, any further debate about it may seem either needless or unseasonable. Something, therefore, may be said to evidence that the reader is not imposed on by what may absolutely fall under either of these characteristics. If the end had been effectively accomplished in and by these discourses, it would have been altogether useless to renew an endeavor to the same purpose. But because an opposition to the Scripture, and the grounds on which we believe it to be a divine revelation, is still openly continued among us, a continuation of the defense of the one and the other

cannot reasonably be judged either needless or unseasonable. Besides, most of the discourses published lately on this subject have had their particular designs, in which the one tendered here is not expressly engaged. For some of them principally aim to prove that we have sufficient grounds to believe the Scripture, without any recourse to or reliance on the authoritative proposal of the church of Rome. They have sufficiently evinced this beyond any possibility of rational contradiction from their adversaries. Others have pleaded and vindicated those rational considerations by which our assent to its divine origin is fortified and confirmed — against the exceptions and objections of those whose love of sin and resolve to live in it, tempt them to seek shelter in an atheistic contempt for the authority of God, which evidences itself in this.

But just as neither of these are utterly neglected in the ensuing discourse, so its particular design is of another nature. For the inquiries managed in this are namely these: What is the obligation on us to believe that the Scripture is the word of God? What are the causes and what is the nature of that faith by which we do so? What does it rest on and resolve into, so as to become a divine and acceptable duty? These respect the consciences of men immediately, [1] and the way by which they may come to find rest and assurance in believing.

It is evident that many are often shaken in their minds by atheistic objections which they frequently meet with, against the divine origin and authority of the Scripture. And many do not know how to extricate themselves from the ensnaring questions they are often attacked with about them — not for lack of a due assent to them, but from a right understanding of what the true and formal reason of that assent is; and what are the firm basis and foundation that it rests upon; and what answer they may directly

and peremptorily give to the inquiry, *Why do you believe the Scripture is the word of God*?

Therefore, I have endeavored to give them those directions in this, so that upon a due examination, they will find that right reason, and their own experience, comply with the Scripture itself. I am not, therefore, altogether without hopes that this small discourse may have its use, and be given out in its proper season. Moreover, I think it necessary to let the reader know that I have allowed all the arguments pleaded by others, to prove the divine authority of the Scripture, their proper place and force. So too, where I differ from the conceptions of other men in the explication of anything belonging to this subject, I have candidly examined such opinions, and the arguments with which they are confirmed, without straining the words, cavilling [2] at the expressions, or reflecting on the persons of any of their authors. And because I have myself been otherwise dealt with by many, and do not know how soon I may be so again, I hereby free persons of such humours and inclinations, from all fear of any reply from me, or of my taking the least notice of what they will be pleased to write or say. Such writings have my same consideration, as those multiplied false reports which some have raised concerning me. Most of them are so ridiculous and foolish, so alien from my principles, practices, and course of life, that I cannot help but wonder how any persons pretending to gravity and sobriety are not sensible how their credulity and inclinations are abused in hearing and receiving them.

The occasion of this discourse is what, lastly, I will acquaint the reader with. About three years ago I published a book about the dispensation and operations of the Spirit of God. That book was only one part of what I designed on that subject. The consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit as

the Spirit of illumination, of supplication, of consolation, and as the immediate author of all spiritual offices and gifts, extraordinary and ordinary, is designed for the second part. And of this, the ensuing discourse concerns one part of his work as a Spirit of illumination. Upon the earnest requests of some who are acquainted with the nature and substance of it, I have allowed this to come out by itself, so that it might be of more common use and more easily obtained.

J.O.

May 11, 1677.

THE REASON OF FAITH

OR,

THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE SCRIPTURE IS BELIEVED TO BE

THE WORD OF GOD WITH DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL FAITH.

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1. Owen uses the word "immediately" in two ways throughout this work. Here it means "directly," *i.e.,* without any intervening or "mediate" cause. He also uses it as a length of time; but rather than *instantaneously*, it only means "shortly" or "soon."

2. *Cavilling*: raising trivial objections to something; quibbling.

Chapter I. The Work of the Holy Ghost in the illumination of the minds of men

The subject stated — Preliminary remarks. The principal design of that discourse of which the ensuing treatise is a part, is to declare the work of the Holy Ghost in the illumination of the minds of men — for this work is particularly and eminently ascribed to him — or the efficacy of the grace of God is dispensed by him, Eph 1.17-18; Heb 6.4; Luk 2.32; Acts 13.47, 16.14, 26.18; 2Cor 4.4; 1Pet 2.9.

The objective cause and outward means of illumination are the subjects at present designed for our consideration; and it will issue in these two inquiries:

1. On what grounds, or for what reason, do we believe the Scripture is the word of God, with divine and supernatural faith, as it is required of us in a way of duty?

2. How or by what means may we come to rightly understand the mind of God in the Scripture, or the revelations that are made to us of his mind and will in this?

By *illumination* in general, as it denotes an effect worked in the minds of men, I understand it to mean that supernatural knowledge which any man may have of the mind and will of God, as revealed to him by supernatural means, for the law of his faith, life, and obedience. And so far as it is comprised in the first of these inquiries, it is the declaration of this which we design at present, reserving the latter inquiry for a distinct discourse by itself.

As to the former, some things may be premised:

First. Supernatural *revelation is the only objective cause and means of supernatural illumination*. These things are commensurate. There is a natural knowledge of supernatural things, which is both theoretical and practical, Rom 1.19, 2.14-15; [1] and there may be a supernatural knowledge of natural things, 1Kng 4.31-34; Exo 31.2-6. [2]

But for this supernatural illumination, it is required that its object be things that are revealed only supernaturally, or *as* revealed supernaturally, 1Cor 2.9-10; [3] and it is required that it be worked in us by a supernatural efficiency, or by the immediate efficacy of the Spirit of God, Eph 1.17-19; 2Cor 4.6. [4] This is what David prays for, Psa 119.18, "'Reveal,' or uncover my eyes, bring light and spiritual understanding into my mind, 'that I may behold', with open face," or as in the Syriac, "with a revealed or uncovered face" (the veil being taken away, 2Cor 3.18), 'wondrous things out of your law.'" The light he prayed for *within*, merely respected the doctrine of the law *without*. The apostle fully declares this in Heb 1.1-2. [5] The various supernatural revelations that God has made of himself, his mind, and will, from first to last, are the sole and adequate object of supernatural illumination.

Secondly. This *divine external revelation* was originally given to various persons immediately, [6] in various ways (which we have declared elsewhere) — partly for their own instruction and guidance in the knowledge of God and his will, and partly to be communicated to the church by their ministry. So it was granted to Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who upon that grant, prophesied to warn and instruct others, Jude 1.14-15; [7] and to Noah, who thereby became a preacher of righteousness, 2Pet 2.5; and to Abraham who upon that, commanded his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, Gen 18.19. [8] Other instances of a similar kind may be given, Gen 4.26, 5:29. [9] And God continued this course for a long time, from the very first promise to the giving of the law, long before any revelations were committed to writing — for the space of two thousand four hundred and sixty years. [10] For that long a time, God enlightened the minds of men by supernatural, external, immediate, occasional [11] revelations. Various things may be observed about this divine dispensation, such as —

1. That *it sufficiently evidenced itself to be from God*, to the minds of those to whom it was granted, and the minds also of those to whom these revelations were communicated. During this season, Satan used his utmost endeavors to possess the minds of men with his delusions, under the pretense of divine, supernatural inspirations. For the origin of all his oracles, and emotionalism among the nations of the world, belong to this. There was therefore a divine power and efficacy attending all divine revelations, ascertaining and infallibly assuring the minds of men of their being from God. For if it had not been so, men would never have been able to secure themselves that they were not imposed on them by the crafty deceits of Satan — especially those revelations which contained things that

seemed contrary to their reason, such as the command given to Abraham to sacrifice his son, Gen 22.2.

Therefore, these immediate revelations would not have been a sufficient means to secure the faith and obedience of the church, if they had not carried with them their own evidence that they were from God. What the nature of that evidence was, we will afterwards inquire. For the present I will only say that it was an evidence unto *faith*, and not to *sense*; as is that evidence which we now have by the Scripture. It is not like that evidence which the sun gives of itself by its light, which does not need the exercise of reason to assure us of it, for sense is irresistibly affected by it. Rather, it is like the evidence which the heavens and the earth give of their being made and created by God, by his being and power. They do this undeniably and infallibly, Psa 19.1-2; Rom 1.19-21. [12] Yet it is required that men use and exercise the best of their rational abilities in the consideration and contemplation of them. Where this is neglected, notwithstanding their open and visible evidence to the contrary, men degenerate into atheism. God gave these revelations of himself so as to require the exercise of the faith, conscience, obedience, and reason of those to whom they were made; and in this, they gave full assurance of their proceeding from Him. So he tells us that his word differs from all other pretended revelations, as the wheat differs from the chaff, Jer 23.28. Yet it is our duty to try and sift the wheat from the chaff, or we may not evidently discern the one from the other.

2. The things so revealed were *sufficient* to guide and direct all persons in the knowledge of their duty to God, in all that was required of them in a way of faith or obedience. God from the beginning gave out the knowledge of his will, by various parts and degrees. Yet this was so done, that every age and season had light enough to guide them in the whole obedience

required of them, and for their edification in this. They had knowledge enough to enable them to offer sacrifices in faith, as Abel did; and to walk with God, as Enoch did; and to teach their families the fear of the Lord, as Abraham did. The world did not perish for lack of sufficient revelation of the mind of God at any time. Indeed, when we go to consider those divine instructions, which are on record that God granted to these men, we are scarcely able to discern how they were sufficiently enlightened in all that was necessary for them to believe and do; but these instructions were to them "as a light shining in a dark place." 2Pet 1.19 Set up but a candle in a dark room, and it will sufficiently enlighten it for men to attend to their necessary occasions [13] in it. But when the sun has risen and shines through all the windows, the light of the candle grows so dim and useless, it seems strange that anyone could have had an advantage by it. The Sun of Righteousness has now risen upon us, and immortality is brought to light by the gospel.

If we look now at the revelations granted to those of old, we may see there was light in them; yet it yields us little more advantage than the light of a candle in the sun. But for those who lived before this Sun arose, they were a sufficient guide to all duties of faith and obedience; for —

3. During this season, there was *a sufficient ministry* for declaring the *revelations* which God made of himself and his will. There was the natural ministry of parents, who were obliged to instruct their children and families in the knowledge of the truth which they had received. And because this began in Adam, who first received the promise, and also whatever was necessary for faith and obedience, the knowledge of it could not be lost without the wilful neglect of parents in teaching, or of children and families in learning. And they had the extraordinary ministry of those whom God

entrusted with new revelations for the confirmation and enlargement of those revelations received before. All of them were preachers of righteousness to the rest of mankind. And it may be manifested that, from the giving of the first promise — when divine external revelations began to be the rule of faith and life to the church — to the writing of the law, there was always one or another alive who, receiving divine revelations immediately, was a kind of infallible guide to others. If it was otherwise at any time, it was after the death of the patriarchs, before the call of Moses. During this time all things went into darkness and confusion — for oral tradition alone would not preserve the truth of former revelation. But by whomever these instructions were received, they had a sufficient outward means for their illumination, before any divine revelations were recorded by writing. Yet —

4. This way of instruction, as it was inherently *imperfect* and liable to many disadvantages, so through the weakness, negligence, and wickedness of men, it proved insufficient to retain the knowledge of God in the world. For under this dispensation, mankind generally fell into their great apostasy from God, and took to the conduct and service of the devil — in the ways, means, and degrees of which I have discussed elsewhere. [14] Upon this, God also did not regard them, but "allowed all nations to walk in their own ways," Act 14.16, "giving them up to their own hearts' lusts," to "walk in their own counsels," as it is expressed in Psalm 81.12. And although this did not happen without the horrible wickedness and ingratitude of the world, there was then no *certain standard* of divine truth to which they might resort. And so they broke away from God more easily, through the imperfection of this dispensation. It may be said that, since the revelation of the will of God has been committed to writing, men have apostatized from

the knowledge of God — this is evident in many nations of the world, those which professed the gospel for some time, but are now overrun with heathenism, Mohammedanism, and idolatry.

I say, this has not come to pass through any defect in the way and means of illumination, or the communication of the truth to them. Rather, God has given them up to be destroyed for their wickedness and ingratitude; "unless we repent, we will all likewise perish," Rom 1.18; 2Thes 2.11-12, Luk 13.3. Otherwise, once the standard of the word has been fixed, there is a constant means of preserving divine revelations. This is why —

Thirdly. God has gathered into the *Scripture* all the divine revelations given by himself from the beginning of the world, and all that will ever be given to the end of this world, which are of general use to the church. This has been done so that the world may be thoroughly instructed in the whole mind and will of God, and directed in all that worship of him, and obedience to him, which is necessary to give us acceptance with him here, and bring us to the eternal enjoyment of him hereafter; for —

1. When God first committed the law to writing, with all those things which accompanied it, he obliged the church to the use of it *alone*, without additions of any kind. Now, he would not have done this had he not expressed in this — that is, in the books of Moses — all that was in any way needful to the faith and obedience of the church. For he not only commanded them to attend with all diligence to his word as it was then written — for their instruction and direction in faith and obedience, annexing all sorts of promises to their doing so, Deu 6.6-7 [15] — but he also expressly forbids them, as was said, to add anything to it or to conjoin anything with it, Deu 4.2, 12.32. [16] He would not have done this if he had omitted other divine revelations given before, that were in any way

necessary to the use of the church. As he added many new ones, so he gathered in all the old from the unfaithful repository of *tradition*, and fixed them in a writing that was given by divine inspiration.

2. For all other divine revelations which were given to the church for its use in general under the Old Testament, they are all comprised in the *books following* it; [17] nor was this ever questioned, that I know of, by anyone pretending [18] to sobriety — though some, who would be glad of any pretense against the integrity and perfection of the Scripture, have fruitlessly wrangled about the loss of some books, which they can never prove concerning any book that was certainly of a divine origin.

3. The full revelation of the whole mind of God, to which nothing pretending to this is ever to be added, was committed to and perfected by *Jesus Christ*, Heb 1.1-2. [19] The revelations of God made by him, whether in his own person or by his Spirit to his apostles, were also committed to writing by divine inspiration. This is expressly affirmed concerning what he delivered in his own personal ministry, Luk 1.4, Acts 1.1, Joh 20.31; [20] and it may be proved by compelling arguments concerning the rest of them.

Hence, as the Scriptures of the Old Testament were closed with a caution and admonition to the church to adhere to the law and testimony, threatening a curse for the contrary, Mal 4.4-6; so also the writings of the New Testament are closed with a curse on anyone who presumes to add anything more to it, Rev 22.18. [21]

Therefore —

Fourthly. The Scripture has now become the only external means *of divine supernatural illumination*, because it is the only repository of all divine supernatural revelation. [22] The pretenses of tradition, as a collateral means of preserving and communicating supernatural revelation, have so often

proved false, that I will not further press their impeachment. Besides, I intend those in this discourse, by whom it is acknowledged that the Bible is the only sufficient and perfect treasury of divine revelations. And what has been offered by anyone to weaken or impair the Bible's esteem, by taking away from its credibility, perfection, and sufficiency, as to all its own proper ends, has brought no advantage to the church, nor benefit to the faith of believers. Yet —

Fifthly. In asserting that the Scripture is the *only* external means of divine revelation, I do not assert that it is exclusive of those institutions of God which are subordinate to it, and appointed as means to make it effectual to our souls; such as —

1. Our own *personal endeavors* are required for this purpose, in reading, studying, and meditating on the Scripture, so that we may come to a right apprehension of the things contained in it. It is known to all how frequently this duty is pressed upon us, and what promises are annexed to performing it. [23] Without this, it is in vain to expect illumination by the word — and therefore, we may see many living and walking in extreme darkness, when the word is near them everywhere. Bread, which is the staff of life, will nourish no man who does not provide and feed on it; no more would manna, unless it was gathered and prepared. This is evident, considering our own nature and the nature of divine revelations, and what is necessary to apply one to the other. For God instructs us in his mind and will — as we are men — in and by the rational faculties of our souls. Nor is an external revelation capable of making any other impression on us than what is received in this way. Therefore, when I say that the Scripture is the only external means of our illumination, I include in this all our own personal

endeavors to come to the knowledge of the mind of God in it — this will be spoken to afterwards.

Those who, under any pretenses, keep, drive, or dissuade men from reading and meditating on the Scripture, take an effectual course to keep them in and under the power of darkness.

2. The *mutual instruction* of one another in the mind of God, out of the Scripture, is also required for this. For we are obliged by the law of nature to endeavor for the good of others in various degrees — such as our children, families, neighbors, and all those with whom we interact. This is the principal good, absolutely considered, that we can communicate to others: namely, to instruct them in the knowledge of the mind of God. This whole duty, in all its degrees, is represented in this command: "You shall teach my words diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up," Deu 6.7. Thus, when our Savior found his disciples talking about the things of God by the wayside, he instructed them as a private man, in the sense of the Scripture.[24] And the neglect of this duty in the world — which is so great a duty that the very mention of it, or the least attempt to perform it, is a matter of scorn and reproach — is one cause of that great ignorance and darkness which still abounds among us. But the nakedness of this folly, by which men would be considered Christians despite their open contempt of all Christianity duties, will be laid open in due time.

3. The *ministry of the word* in the church is that which is principally included in this assertion. The Scripture is the only means of illumination; but it becomes a means principally by the application of it to the minds of men in the ministry of the word.[25] The church and its ministry are the

ordinances of God to this end: so that his mind and will, as revealed in the word, may be made known to the children of men, by which they are enlightened. That church and ministry in which this is not the first and principal design and work, is neither appointed by God nor approved by him. Men will one day find themselves deceived in trusting to empty names; it is duty alone that will be comfort and reward, Dan 12.3. [26]

Sixthly. Two things are required so that the Scripture, which thus contains the whole of divine revelation, may be a sufficient external cause of illumination to us:

1. That we *believe the Scripture is a divine revelation* — that is, the word of God, or a declaration of himself, his mind and will, immediately proceeds from him; or that it is of a pure divine origin, proceeding neither from the folly or deceit of men, nor from their skill or honesty. [27]

It tenders no light or instruction under any other notion than as it comes immediately from God — "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God," 1Thes 2.13. And whatever anyone may learn from or by the Scriptures, under any other consideration, it does not belong to the illumination we inquire after. [28]

2. That we *understand the things declared in it*, or the mind of God as revealed and expressed in it. For if it were given to us as a sealed book which we cannot read — either because it is sealed or because we are ignorant and cannot read — whatever visions or means of light it has, we will have no advantage by it, Isa 29.11-12. [29] It is not only the words themselves of the Scripture, but our understanding them, that gives us light: the opening of the door, "the entrance of your word gives light," Psa 119.130. It must be *opened*, or it will not *enlighten*. So the disciples did not understand the testimonies of the Scripture concerning the Lord Christ, they

were not enlightened by them, until he expounded them to them, Luk 24.27, 45. [30] And we have the same instance in the eunuch and Philip. [31] To this very day the nation of the Jews hold the scriptures of the Old Testament and their outward letter in such esteem and veneration, that they even adore and worship them; yet they are not enlightened by it. And the same has happened among many who are called Christians, or else they could never embrace such foolish opinions, and practice such idolatries in worship, as some of them do; yet they enjoy the letter of the gospel.

This brings me to my design, which we thus far have been making our way to: it is to show that both these things are from the Holy Ghost — namely, that we truly *believe* the Scripture is the word of God, and that we savingly *understand* the mind of God in it; both of which belong to our illumination.

First, I will inquire into how, and the ground on which, we come to believe in a due manner, that the Scripture is the word of God. For I suppose it will not be denied, and it will afterwards be proved, that this is required of us in a way of duty: namely, that we believe the Scripture is the word of God, with divine and supernatural faith. And our first inquiry will be what the work of the Spirit of God is in this.

Secondly, we see by experience that all who have or enjoy the Scripture do not yet understand it, nor do they come to a useful, saving knowledge of the mind and will of God revealed in it. And so our other inquiry will be this: how we may come to understand the word of God rightly, and what the work of the Spirit of God is in the assistance he affords us to that purpose.

With respect to the first of these inquiries — to which the present discourse is singly designed — I affirm that, *it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe that the Scripture is the word of God*, or the

supernatural, immediate revelation of his mind to us; and to infallibly evidence it to our minds in such a way that we may spiritually and savingly acquiesce in this. Some, mistaking this proposition, seem to suppose that we resolve all faith into private suggestions of the Spirit, or into deluding pretenses of it. And some (it may be) are ready to apprehend that we confound the *efficient* cause and the *formal* reason of faith or believing,[32] rendering all rational arguments and external testimonies useless. But indeed, there is not, nor will there be, any occasion given for these fears or imaginations. For we will plead nothing in this matter except what is consonant to the faith and judgment of the ancient and present church of God, as will be fully evidenced in our progress. I know some have discovered other ways by which the minds of men, they suppose, may be sufficiently satisfied in the divine authority of the Scripture. But I have tasted their new wine and I do not desire it, because I know the old wine is better, even though what they plead has its use in its proper place.

1. **Rom 1:19** because what may be known of God is manifest in [men], for God has shown *it* to them. **Rom 2:14** for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, [15] who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)

2. **1Kng 4:31** For he was wiser than all men-- than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. [32] He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. [33] Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. [34] And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. **Exo 31:2** "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. [3] "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of* workmanship, [4] "to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, [5] "in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of* workmanship. [6] "And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you.

3. **1Cor 2:9** But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those

who love Him." [10] But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

4. **Eph 1:17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, [18] the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, [19] and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. **2Cor 4:6** For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

5. **Heb 1:1** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, [2] has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

6. *Immediately*: directly, without additional intermediary means.

7. **Jude 1:14** Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, [15] "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

8. **Gen 18:19** "For I have known [Heb. *yada* OT:03045 *qal* tense] him, **in order that** he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

9. **Gen 4:26** And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD. **Gen 5:29** And he called his name Noah, saying, "This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed."

10. A general figure only (Rom 5.14). In Owen's Sermon V. – "The Shaking and Translating of Heaven and Earth," (*Works*, vol. 8) he uses this same figure, but adds the words, "at least." It may be based on Bishop Ussher's *The Annals of the World* (pub. 1650), in which creation is placed at 4004 B.C., and the giving of the law at Sinai in 1491 B.C. (par. 193) – WHG

11. *Occasional*: as occasion required.

12. **Psa 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. [2] Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. **Rom 1:19** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. [20] For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, [21] because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

13. *Occasions*: something you have to do; duties.

14. *De Natura Theologiæ*, lib. iii.

15. **Deu 6:6** "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. [7] "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

16. **Deu 4:2** "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. **Deu 12:32** "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.
17. That is, those books written after the first five books of Moses.
18. *Pretend*: to put forward a guess, in spite of possible refutation; to make an unsupported assertion.
19. **Heb 1:1** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, [2] has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
20. **Luk 1:4** that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. **Act 1:1** The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach; **Joh 20:31** but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.
21. **Mal 4:4** "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With the* statutes and judgments. [5] Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. [6] And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." **Rev 22:18** For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;
22. **Psa 19:7** The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; [8] The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is*

pure, enlightening the eyes; **Isa 8:20** To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. **2Tim 3:15** and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

23. See Deu 6.6-7; 11.18-19; Josh 1.8; Psa 1.2; 119; Col 3.16; 2Tim 3.15.

24. Luke 24.26, 27, 32 (*to Emmaus*). "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" [27] And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... [32] And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

25. See Mat 5.14-15; 2Cor 5.18-20; Eph 4.11-15; 1Tim 3.15.

26. **Dan 12:3** Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

27. So it is stated in 2Pet 1.19-21; Heb 1.1; 2Tim 3.16; Isa 8.20. **2Pet 1:19** And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; [20] knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, [21] for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

28. Neh 8.8; Isa 28.9; Hos 14.9; Pro 1.6; Psa 119.34; Mat 15.16; 2Tim 2.7, 1John 5.20.

29. **Isa 29:11** The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it *is* sealed." [12] Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I am not literate."

30. *On the road to Emmaus*: **Luke 24:45** And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

31. Acts 8.31, 34, 35. **Act 8:30** So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" [31] And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him... [35] Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

32. Today we would say, "reason FOR faith," but that can be misleading. The reason *for* faith is salvation – that's faith's *purpose*, or the reason why we must have faith. Faith is the *instrumental* cause of salvation (Heb 11.6). But the *formal cause* of faith itself, is what our faith is based on. Now, Christ is the *object* of our faith – we must believe on him (Joh 6.40). Yet we know nothing of Christ and the Gospel that isn't drawn from Scripture. Scripture is therefore the *instrumental cause* (or reason) of our faith. But why should we believe the Scripture at all? "Well," we answer, "*because* it is the word of God." Yes, but *why* should we believe it is the word of God? Whatever that reason is, it is the *formal cause* (or reason) of our faith. Owen intends to prove that our belief of Scripture — our belief that it is the word of God — is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter II. What it means to infallibly believe that the Scripture is the Word of God

My design requires that I should confine my discourse to as narrow bounds as possible, and I will do so, showing —

I. What it means in general *to infallibly believe* [1] *that the Scripture is the word of God*, and what the ground and reason is for our doing so; or what it means to believe that the Scripture is the word of God, as we are required to believe, in a way of duty.

II. That there are *external arguments* about the divine origin of the Scripture, which are effectual motives to persuade us to give an unfeigned assent to this.

III. That, moreover, God requires us to believe that it is his word *with divine*, *supernatural, and infallible faith*.

IV. *Evidence* the grounds and reasons on which we do and ought to believe so.

Most of what ensues in the first part of this discourse may be reduced to these heads.

It is fitting that we should clarify the foundation on which we build, and the principles on which we proceed, so that what we design to prove may be better understood by all sorts of persons whose edification we intend. For these things are the equal concern of the learned and unlearned. Therefore, some things must be insisted on which are generally known and granted. And our first inquiry is this: What does it mean to believe with divine and supernatural faith, that the Scripture is the word of God, as it is our duty so to do?

1. In our *believing*, or our faith, two things are to be considered:

(1.) *What* it is that we believe; and,

(2.) *Why* we so believe it.

The first is the *material* object of our faith — namely, the *things* which we believe. The second is the *formal* object of our faith — the cause and reason *why* we believe them. [2] And these things are distinct. The material object of our faith is the things revealed in the Scripture, declared to us in propositions of truth; for things must be proposed to us, or else we cannot believe them. That God is one in three persons, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and similar propositions of truth, are the material object of our faith, or the *things* we believe. And the reason *why* we believe them is because they are proposed in the Scripture. The apostle expresses the whole of what we intend, in 1Cor 15.3-4, "I delivered to you first of all, that which I also received, how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, are the things proposed to us to be believed; and so they are the object of our faith. But the reason why we believe them, is because they are declared in the Scriptures. [3] Sometimes this expression, "believing the Scriptures," denotes by a

metonymy,[4] both the formal and material objects of our faith. We believe the Scriptures themselves, as such, *and* the things contained in them. Thus Joh 2.22: "They believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus said;" or the things delivered in the Scripture and further declared by Christ, which they did not understand before. And they believed what was declared in the Scriptures, *because* it was declared in them. Under various considerations, both are intended in the same expression, "They believed the Scripture." So it is in Acts 26.27.[5] The material object of our faith, therefore, is stated in the articles of our creed. By enumerating them, we answer the question, "What do we believe?" We give an account of the hope that is in us, as the apostle does in Acts 26.22-23. But if, moreover, we are asked for the reason of our faith or hope, or *why* we believe the things we profess — such as God is one in three persons, Jesus Christ is the Son of God — we do not answer, "Because it is so: for this is what we believe;" that would be senseless. Rather, we must give some other answer to that inquiry, whether it is made by others or ourselves. The proper answer to this question contains the formal reason and object of our faith — what it rests on and is resolved into — and this is what we are looking for.

2. In this inquiry, we do not seek any kind of persuasion or faith, except that which is divine and *infallible*; both of which are from its formal reason or objective cause. Men may be able to give some reasons why they believe what they profess; but that will not suffice or abide the trial in this case, even though they themselves may rest in them. Some, it may be, can give no other account for this, than that they were instructed by those whom they have s*ufficient reason to* give credit to; or they received these things by tradition from their fathers. Now, whatever persuasion these reasons may produce in the minds of men — that the things which they profess to

believe, are true — if they are alone, [6] then it is not divine faith by which they believe, but merely human faith. It is resolved into human testimony only, or an opinion based on probable arguments. For no faith can be of any other kind than the evidence it reflects on or arises from. I say, this is so where these things are alone. For I do not doubt that some who have never considered the reason of their believing, further than that it is the teaching of their instructors, still have that evidence in their own souls of the truth and authority of God in what they believe. And it is with respect to *this*, that their faith is divine and supernatural. The faith of most has a beginning and progress that is not unlike that of the Samaritans in Joh 4.40-42, [7] as will be declared afterwards.

3. When we inquire after faith that is infallible, or believing infallibly — which is necessary in this case, as we will show later — we do not intend an *inherent quality* in the subject, as though someone who believes with infallible faith must also be infallible himself. Much less do we speak of infallibility absolutely, which is a property of God. He alone, from the perfection of his nature, can neither deceive nor be deceived. Rather, infallibility is that property or adjunct of the assent of our minds to divine truths or supernatural revelations, by which it is differenced from all other kinds of assent whatsoever. And it has this from its formal object, or the evidence upon which we give this assent, For the nature of every assent is given to it by the nature of the evidence which it proceeds from or relies on. In divine faith, this is *divine revelation*. Being infallible, this renders the faith that rests on it, and is resolved into it, infallible also. No man can believe with divine faith that which is false, or may be false; for what renders it divine is the divine truth and infallibility of the ground and evidence on which it is built.

But a man may believe what is infallibly true, and yet his *faith* not be infallible. It is infallibly true that the Scripture is the word of God; and yet the faith by which a man believes it is the word of God may be fallible; for his faith is only as infallible as his *evidence*.

He may believe it is the word of God based on tradition, or on the testimony of the church of Rome only, or on outward arguments — all of which being fallible, his faith is also fallible— even though the things he assents to are infallibly true. This is why, for this faith to be divine and infallible, it is not required that the person in whom such faith is found, be infallible himself. Nor is it enough that the thing believed is infallibly true; but more than this, the evidence on which the person believes must also be infallible. So it was with those who received divine revelations immediately from God. It was not enough that the things revealed to them were infallibly true, but they were to have infallible evidence of the revelation itself; *then* their faith was infallible, even though their persons were fallible. With this faith, then, a man can believe nothing but what is divinely true: *therefore* it is infallible; and the reason is because God's veracity, who is the God of truth, is the only object of his faith. Hence the prophet says, "Believe in the Lord your God; *so* you will be established," 2Chr 20.20 — or, that faith which is placed in God and his word is fixed *on truth*, or on what is infallible.

Hence the inquiry in this case is this: What is the reason why we believe anything with this divine or supernatural faith? or, What is it that, by believing it, our faith is made divine, infallible, and supernatural? Therefore —

4. The *authority and veracity* of God in revealing the *material* object of our faith, or what it is our duty to believe, are the *formal* object and reason

of our faith, from which it arises and is ultimately resolved into. That is, the only reason why we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that God is one single essence subsisting in three persons, is because God has revealed these things to be true. For he is the "God of truth," Deu 32.4, who "cannot lie," Tit 1.2, whose "word is truth," Joh 17.17, and whose Spirit which conveyed it is "truth," 1Joh 5.6. Our believing these things on that ground, renders our faith divine and supernatural— supposing there is also respect to the subjective *efficiency* of the Holy Ghost inspiring it into our minds (more of that afterwards). Or, to speak distinctly, our faith is *supernatural* with respect to its production in our minds by the Holy Ghost; and it is *infallible* with respect to the formal reason of it, which is divine revelation. And on both accounts *it is divine*, in opposition to what is merely human. As things are proposed to us to be believed as true, faith in its assent respects only the truth or veracity of *God.*

But as this faith is required of us in a way of *obedience*, and as it is considered not only physically in its nature, but also morally as our duty, it also respects the authority of God. I therefore join it with the truth of God as the formal reason of our faith.[8] And the Scripture pleads and argues these things when faith is required of us in the way of obedience. "Thus says the Lord," is what is proposed to us as the reason why we should believe what is said. Other divine names and titles are often added to it, signifying the authority of the one who requires us to believe: "Thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel," Isa 30.15; "Thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy," Isa 57.15; "Believe in the Lord your God," 2Chr 20.20. "The word of the Lord" precedes most revelations in the prophets; and the Scripture proposes no other reason why we should believe.[9] Indeed, the interposition of any other authority besides

that of God, between the things to be believed, and our souls and consciences, overthrows the nature of divine faith — I am not saying the interposition of any other *means* by which we should believe, for God has appointed many sorts of these — but the interposition of any other *authority* upon which we should believe, such as that pretended in and by the church of Rome. No men can be lords of our faith, even though they may be "helpers of our joy." 2Cor 1.24

5. The *authority and truth* of God, considered in themselves absolutely, are not the immediate *formal* object of our faith, even though they are the *ultimate object* into which it is resolved; for we can believe nothing on their account unless it is *evidenced* to us. And this evidence is in that revelation which God is pleased to make of himself; for that is the only means by which our consciences and minds are affected with his truth and authority. Therefore, we do not rest on the truth and veracity of God in other anything, than as we rest on the revelation that he makes to us; for that is the only way by which we are affected with them. What we immediately regard is not "The Lord is true" absolutely; but "Thus *says* the Lord," and "The Lord has *spoken*." It is by this alone that our minds are affected with the authority and veracity of God; and by whatever way it is made to us, it is sufficient and able to thus affect us. At first, as it has been shown, revelation was given immediately to some persons and preserved for the use of others in an *oral* ministry. But now all revelation, as it has also been declared, is contained in the Scriptures only.

6. It follows from this, that our faith by which we believe any divine, supernatural truth, is resolved into the Scripture, as the only means of divine revelation, affecting our minds and consciences with the authority and truth of God. Or, the Scripture, as the only immediate, divine, infallible

revelation of the mind and will of God, is the first, immediate, and formal object of our faith — it is the sole reason why and the ground on which we believe the things revealed, with divine, supernatural, and infallible faith.

We believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Why do we so do? On what ground, or for what reason? It is because of the authority of God commanding us to do so, and the truth of God testifying to it. But how or by what means are our minds and consciences affected with the authority and truth of God, so as to *believe* such things, which makes our faith divine and supernatural? It is the divine, supernatural, infallible *revelation* alone that he has made of this sacred truth, and of his will, that is the reason why we should believe it. But what is this revelation, or where is it to be found? It is the Scripture alone, which contains the entire revelation that God has made of himself, in all things which he will have us believe or do. Hence —

7. The last inquiry arises, *How — on what grounds*, for *what reasons* — do we believe that the Scripture is a divine revelation, proceeding immediately from God, or it is that word of God which is divine and infallible truth? To this we answer, It is *solely* on the evidence that the Spirit of God gives to us, in and by the Scripture itself; and that was given by immediate inspiration from God. Or, the reason and ground on which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God, are the authority and truth of God evidencing themselves in and by the Scripture, to the minds and consciences of men. Whatever we assent to, as proposed in the Scripture, our faith rests on and it is resolved into the veracity and faithfulness of God. And in believing that the Scripture itself is the infallible word of God, it is the same — seeing that we believe it on no *other grounds* than its *own evidence* that it is so.

This is what is principally to be proved. And therefore to prepare for it, and to remove prejudices, something is to be said to prepare the way.

1. Owen insists that our belief (or faith) must be infallible. "Infallible" means incapable of failure, not just incapable of fault or error. So Owen is saying that, because God's *revealed word* is infallible (faultless), our *belief* in it can be infallible (unfailing). – WHG

2. Owen is referring to Aristotelian logic concerning the nature and categories of causes. But he calls "formal" what is usually termed "final." Aristotle's four categories are formal, efficient, final, and material. The FORMAL cause is what makes something one thing rather than another – a log and table are both wood, but their properties and arrangement (their form) cause them to be different. The EFFICIENT cause is what actually produces a change or effect – a saw is an efficient cause (a means) in making a table. The FINAL cause is related to its purpose (the why of it), or its relation to other things – the final cause of a table may be to have a place to eat. The MATERIAL cause is what something is made of – wood can be cut and nailed *because* of its material. – WHG

3. See Acts 8.28-38.

4. Substituting the name of an attribute or feature for the name of the thing itself: when we believe the Scriptures, we believe God.

5. **Act 26:27** "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

6. *Alone*: that is, if that's all they are: mere products of the mind, logic, hearsay, or experience.

7. **Joh 4:40** So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. [41] And many more believed because of His own word. [42] Then they said to the woman, "Now we

believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

8. **2Sam 7:28** "And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant.

9. **Heb 1:1-2** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, [2] has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Chapter III. Various convincing external arguments for divine revelation.

There are various cogent arguments which are taken from *external considerations* of the Scripture, that evince on rational grounds that it is from God. All these are motives of credibility, or effectual persuasives to account and esteem it to be the word of God. And although they neither are, nor is it possible for them to ever be, the ground and reason on which we believe it to be the word of God with divine and supernatural faith, they are necessary to confirm our faith in it against temptations, oppositions, and objections. These arguments have been pleaded by many, and usefully so. It is therefore not necessary for me to insist on them. And they are the same in substance, for both ancient and modern writers, however managed by some with more learning, dexterity, and force of reasoning than by others.

It may not be expected, therefore, that in this short discourse designed for another purpose, I would give them much improvement. However, I will touch a little on those which seem to be most cogent, and what it is in them, in which (in my apprehension) their strength lies. I will do this even though we plead that no man can believe with divine, supernatural, and infallible

faith, that the Scriptures are the word of God, except on its own internal divine evidence and efficacy. I do it to manifest that we allow and make use of all those external arguments of the sacred truth and divine origin of the Scriptures which are pleaded by others, ascribing to them as much weight and cogency as possible. And we acknowledge that the persuasion which these arguments produce and effect, is as firm as they can pretend it to be. Only, we do not judge that they contain the *whole* of the evidence which we have for faith to rest on or to be resolved into — indeed, not that evidence at all which renders it divine, supernatural, and infallible. The rational arguments, we say, which are or may be used in this matter — with the human testimonies by which they are corroborated — may and ought to be made use of and insisted on. It is but vainly pretended that their use is superseded by our other assertions — as though, where faith is required, all the subservient use of reason would be absolutely discarded, and our faith rendered irrational thereby.

The assent to the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures, which the mind ought to give, based upon these arguments, we grant are of as high a nature as it is pretended to be — namely, a moral certainty. Moreover, the conclusion which unprejudiced reason will make upon these arguments is firmer, better grounded, and more pleadable, than that which is built solely on the authority of any church whatever. But we assert that there is another kind of assent to the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures that is required of us — namely, that of divine and supernatural faith. None will say that such faith can be effected by or resolved into the best and most cogent of rational arguments and external testimonies, which are absolutely human and fallible. For it implies a contradiction to believe *infallibly* upon *fallible* evidence. Therefore, I will prove that, beyond all these arguments

and their effect on our minds, we are required to assent to the Scripture as the word of God, with divine, supernatural, and infallible faith. And therefore, there must be a divine evidence which is the formal object and reason of this faith, on which alone it rests and is resolved into. This will also be declared and proved. Yet, as said in the first place, because their property is to level the ground, and to remove the rubbish of objections out of the way, that we may build safer on the sure foundation, I will mention some of those arguments which I esteem are justly pleadable in this cause; and —

1. The *antiquity* of these writings, and of the divine revelation contained in them, is pleaded in evidence of their divine origin; and this is deservedly so, for where it is absolute, it is unquestionable; what is most ancient in any kind is most true. God himself makes use of this plea against idols: Isa 43.10-12, "You are my witnesses, says the Lord. I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no savior. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shown, when there was no strange god among you. Therefore, you are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God." What he asserts is that he alone is God, and no other. He calls the people to testify by this argument, that he was among them as God — that is, in the church — before any strange god was known or named. And so it is justly pleaded in behalf of this revelation of the mind of God in the Scripture, that it was in the world long before any other thing or writing pretended to be given to the same end. Whatever, therefore, ensued of a like design, must either be set up in competition with Scripture, or in opposition to it, over which Scripture has its advantage merely from its antiquity.

Therefore, because the first books of this writing are acknowledged to be more ancient than any other that is extant in the world, or indeed that ever

was so, and may be *proved* to be so, it is beyond all reasonable apprehension that it should be of human origin. For we know how low, weak, and imperfect, all human inventions were at first — how rude and unpolished in every kind — until time, observation, subsequent additions and diminutions, had shaped, formed, and improved them. But this writing was issued in the world absolutely, the first of its kind, directing us in the knowledge of God and ourselves. It was from the first, and at once, so absolutely complete and perfect that no art, industry, or wisdom of man, has ever yet found any just defect in it, or been able to add anything to it by which it might be bettered or improved. From the beginning, it would never allow any additions to it, except what came from the same fountain of divine revelation and inspiration — thus clearing itself, in all ages, from all addition and superfetation [1] whatsoever by men. This at least puts a singular character upon this book, and represents it with such reverend awe and majesty, that it is the highest petulancy [2] not to pay it sacred respect.

This argument is pursued by many at large, as that which affords a great variety of historical and chronological observations. It has been so examined and proved, that nothing remains for present or future diligence, than giving it a new dress. But the real force of it lies in the consideration of the people by and among whom this revelation first commenced in the world, and the time in which it did so. When some nations had so improved and cultivated the light of nature as to greatly excel others in wisdom and knowledge, they generally looked at the Jews as ignorant and barbarous.

And the wiser any of these nations conceived of themselves, the more they despised the Jews. And, indeed, the Jews were utter strangers to all those arts and sciences by which the faculties of men's minds are naturally enlightened and enlarged. Nor did the Jews pretend to have any wisdom by

which to compete with other nations, except what they received by divine revelations. God himself had taught them to look at this alone, and to esteem it as their only wisdom before all the world, Deu 4.6-8. [3] Now, we will not need to consider what the first attempts of other nations were in expressing their conceptions concerning divine things, the duty and happiness of man. The Egyptians and Grecians were those who vied for a reputation in the improvement of this wisdom. But it is known and confessed that the utmost production of their endeavors were foolish things, irrational and absurd, contrary to the being and providence of God and to the light of nature, leading mankind into a maze of folly and wickedness. But we may consider what these nations attained to in the fullness of time by their utmost improvement of science, wisdom, mutual intelligence, experience, communication, laborious study, and observation. When they had added to and deducted from the inventions of all former ages from time immemorial — when they had used and improved the reason, wisdom, invention, and conjectures of all that went before them in the study of this wisdom — when they had discarded whatever they had found by experience was unsuited to natural light and the common reason of mankind — it must yet be acknowledged that the apostle passes a just censure on their utmost attainments: namely, that "they grew vain in their imaginations," and "the world by wisdom did not know God." [4]

This one nation of the Jews was esteemed barbarous, and really so with respect to that wisdom, and those arts and sciences, which ennobled other nations. From antiquity it was not pretended that reason and wisdom had received any considerable improvement [among them]: they were without converse, communication, learning, or experience. [5] Why was it, then, that there should at once proceed such a law, doctrine, and instructions

concerning God and man, that were so stable, certain, and uniform, as not only to incomparably excel all products of human wisdom for that purpose — however advantaged by time and experience — but also to abide invariable throughout all generations? Whatever has been advanced in opposition to it, or merely differing from it, has quickly sunk under the weight of its own unreasonableness and folly. This one consideration (unless men have a mind to be contentious) gives sufficient satisfaction that this book could have no other origin than what it pleads for itself — namely, an immediate emanation from God.

2. It is apparent that God in all ages has had a great regard for it, and acted in his power and care in its preservation. If the Bible were not what it pretends to be, there would have been nothing more suitable to the nature of God, and more becoming divine providence, than long since to have blotted it out of the world. For to allow a book to be in the world from the "beginning of times," falsely pretending to carry his name and authority, seducing so great a portion of mankind into a pernicious and ruinous apostasy from him (as it must and does do if it is *not* of a divine origin), and exposing inconceivable multitudes of the best, wisest, and soberest among them, to all sorts of bloody miseries which they have undergone on behalf of it — does not seem consonant with that infinite goodness, wisdom, and care with which this world is governed from above. But on the contrary, through the watchful care and providence of God, sometimes putting itself forth in *miraculous instances*, the Bible has been preserved to this day, and it will be to the consummation of all things. This is despite the malicious craft of Satan, and the prevalent power and rage of mankind, which have combined and been set at work to the ruin and utter suppression of this book, sometimes proceeding so far that no way of escape was apparent. [6]

The event spoken of by our Savior invincibly proves the divine approbation [7] of this book, as does its divine origin, "Till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle will in any way pass from the law," Mat 5.18. God's perpetual care over the Scripture for so many ages, that not a letter of it should be utterly lost — nothing that has the least tendency towards its end should perish [8] — is sufficient evidence of his regard for it. It would be especially so if we consider with what remarkable judgments and severe reflections of vengeance on its opposers, this care has been managed (instances of which might easily be multiplied). And if any will not ascribe this preservation of the books of the Bible to the care of God — not only in their being, but in their purity and integrity, free from the least just suspicion of corruption, or intermixture of anything human or heterogeneous — it is incumbent on him to assign some other cause that would be proportionate to such an effect, while it was in the interest of heaven [to preserve it], and the endeavor of earth and hell to have it corrupted and destroyed. For my part, I cannot help but judge that the one who does not see a hand of divine Providence stretched out in the preservation of this book, with the open opposition that has been made to it, does not believe there is any such thing as divine providence at all. For all that is in it, in its words and syllables, was preserved for thousands of years through all the overthrows and deluges of calamities that have befallen the world, with the weakness of the means by which it has been preserved, and the interest in some ages of all those in whose power it was to have it corrupted — as it was in the interest of the apostate churches of the Jews and Christians.

It was first written in the very infancy of the *Babylonian* empire, a contemporary of Israel for about nine hundred years. By this monarchy, that

people *which alone had these oracles of God committed to them*, were oppressed, destroyed, and carried into captivity. But this book was then preserved among them while they were absolutely under the power of their enemies, even though it condemned those enemies and all their gods and religious worship, which we know how horribly mankind is enraged with. Satan had enthroned himself as the object of their worship, and the author of all ways of divine veneration among them. They adhered to these as their principal interest; as all people do to what they esteem their religion. In the whole world there was nothing that judged, condemned, and opposed him or them, *except this book*, which was now absolutely in their power. If it could have been destroyed by any means, then when it was in the hands of but a few, and them for the most part flagitious [9] in their lives, hating the things contained in the book, and wholly under the power of their adversaries, then the interest of Satan and the whole world in idolatry, would have been secured. But through the mere provision of divine care, the book outlived that monarchy, and saw the ruin of its greatest adversaries. So it also did during the continuance of the *Persian* monarchy which succeeded it, while the people were still under the power of idolaters. This book was the only testimony in the world against them.

By some branches of the *Grecian* monarchy, a most fierce and diligent attempt was made to have the book utterly destroyed; but still it was snatched out of the furnace by divine power — not one hair of it was singed, nor the least detriment brought to its perfection. The Romans destroyed both the people and the place designed for its preservation up until then. On the conquest of Jerusalem, they carried the ancient copy of the law in triumph to Rome. And while all absolute Power and dominion in the whole world was in their hands, wherever this book was known or heard

of, they exercised a rage against it for a number of ages, with the same success that former enemies had. From the very first, all the endeavors of mankind that professed an open enmity against the book have been utterly frustrated. And also, those to whom it was outwardly committed — first the Jews and afterwards the *antichristian* church of apostatized Christians — not only fell into opinions and practices absolutely inconsistent with it, but they also built all their present and future interests on those opinions and practices. Yet none of them ever dared to attempt corrupting one line in it, who were not forced to attempt their own security by a pretense of *additional traditions*, and of keeping the book itself (as much as they dared) out of the hands and knowledge of all who were not engaged in the same interest as themselves. From what could all this proceed, if not from the watchful care and power of divine Providence?

It is brutish folly not to believe that what God so protected, originally proceeded from himself, seeing that it pleads and pretends to do so; for every wise man will take more care of a stranger, than of a bastard that is falsely imposed on him to his dishonor.

3. The *design of the whole*, and all its parts, has an impress on it of divine wisdom and authority. And there are two parts of this: first, to reveal God to men; and secondly, to direct men to come to the enjoyment of God. It would be easy to prove that these are the only two great concerns of our nature (of any rational being), but that is acknowledged by all those with whom I deal. Now, no book or writing in the world, in the way of authority, no single or joint endeavor of mankind or of invisible spirits, ever gave out a law, rule, guide, and light for all mankind universally in both these parts — namely, the knowledge of God and ourselves — except this book. And any other, perhaps like the Koran, that pretended in the least to do it,

quickly revealed its own folly, and exposed itself to the contempt of all wise and considerate men. The only question is, How has the Bible discharged itself in this design? For if it has completely and perfectly accomplished it, then it is not only evident that it must be from God, but also that it is the greatest benefit and kindness that divine benignity and goodness ever granted to mankind. For without it, all men universally must necessarily wander in an endless maze of uncertainties, without ever attaining light, rest, or blessedness, here or hereafter. Therefore —

(1.) It takes on itself to speak in *the name and authority of God*; and it delivers nothing, commands nothing, except what becomes his infinite holiness, wisdom, and goodness. Thus it makes such a declaration of him — in his nature, being, and subsistence, with the necessary properties and acts thereof; and of his will, with all his voluntary actings or works in which we may be or are concerned — that we may know him rightly, and entertain true notions and apprehensions of him, according to the utmost capacity of our finite, limited understanding. Nor do we urge his authority in this case, without here and elsewhere resorting to the evidence of his reasonings, compared with the event or matter of fact. What horrible darkness, ignorance, and blindness, was upon the whole world with respect to the knowledge of God — what confusion and debasement of our nature ensued from that — while God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, and winked at the times of their ignorance," as the apostle declares at large in Rom 1, from the 18th verse to the end of the chapter.

The sum is this: the only true God had become unknown to them, as the wisest of them acknowledged, Acts 17.23, [10] and as our apostle proved against them.

The devil, that murderer from the beginning, and enemy of mankind, under various pretenses, had substituted himself in God's place, and had become "the god of this world," as he is called in 2Cor 4.4. He had appropriated to himself all the religious devotion and worship of mankind generally; for "the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, and not to God," as our apostle affirms in 1Cor 10.20, and as may be easily evinced. I have abundantly manifested it elsewhere.[11] It is acknowledged that a few speculative men among the heathen sought after God in that horrid darkness with which they were encompassed. They labored to reduce their conceptions and notions of his being to what reason could apprehend of infinite perfections, and what the works of creation and providence could suggest to them. But they could never come to any certainty or consistency of notions in their own minds, proceeding little beyond conjecture (which is the manner of those who seek after anything in the dark). Much less could they propose to the world anything for the use of mankind in these things, by common consent with one another. And thus none of them could ever free themselves from the grossest practical idolatry in worshipping the devil, the head of their apostasy from God. Nor could they in the least influence the minds of mankind generally, with any due apprehensions of the divine nature. This is the subject and substance of the apostle's argument against them in Romans 1.

In this state of things, what misery and cohesion the world lived in for many ages, what an endless labyrinth of foolish, slavish superstitions and idolatries it had cast itself into! I have particularly declared this another discourse.[12] With respect to this, the Scripture is well called by the apostle Peter "a light shining in a dark place," 2Pet 1.19. It gives to all men at once a perfect, clear, steady, uniform declaration of God — of his being,

subsistence, properties, authority, rule, and actings. This evidences itself to the minds and consciences of all whom the god of this world has not absolutely blinded by the power of prejudices and lusts, confirming them in an enmity to and hatred of God himself. There is, indeed, no more required to free mankind from this horrible darkness, and enormous conceptions about the nature of God and the worship of idols, than a sedate, unprejudiced consideration of the revelation of these things in the books of the Scripture. We may therefore say to all the world, with our prophet, "When they say to you, 'Seek those who have familiar spirits, and wizards that peep and mutter' — should not a people seek their God? Should the living seek the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa 8.19-20.

And this also plainly manifests the Scripture to be of a *divine origin*: for this declaration of God, this revelation of himself and of his will, is incomparably the greatest and most excellent benefit that our nature is capable of in this world — it is more needful [13] for and more useful to mankind than the sun in the firmament, as to the proper end of their lives and beings. And if none of the wisest men in the world, severally or jointly, could attain for themselves or make known to others this knowledge of God, we may say with our apostle that, "in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom did not know God," 1Cor 1.21. Those who attempted any such things "grew vain in their imaginations" and conjectures, so that no one in the world dares admit the regulation of his mind and understanding, by their notions and conceptions absolutely. This is so, even though they had all the advantages of wisdom, and the exercise of reason, above those (at least most of them) who wrote and published the books of the Scripture. And so it cannot, with any pretense of reason, be questioned whether these were

given by inspiration from God, as they pretend and plead. There was done in those prophets, what all the world could not do, and without which all the world must have been eternally miserable; and who could do this but God? If anyone would judge that the ignorance about God, which existed among the heathens of old or which exists among the Indians at this day, is not so miserable a matter as we make it out to be; or that there is any way to free them from it except by an emanation of light from the Scripture; then he dwells out of my present way, under the confines of atheism, so that I will not divert for any converse with him. I will only add that whatever notions of truth concerning God and his essence may be found in those philosophers who lived *after* the preaching of the gospel in the world, or who are to be found at this day among the Mohammedans or other false worshippers in the world — above those notions of the more ancient Pagans — they all derive from the fountain of the Scripture, and were traduced [14] from it by various means.

(2.) The second end of this doctrine is to *direct mankind in their proper course of living to God*, and attaining that rest and blessedness of which they are capable, and which they cannot help but desire. These things are necessary to our nature; so that without them, it would be better not to exist — for it is better to have no being in the world than, while we have it, to always wander and never act towards our proper end. For all that is really good for us consists in our tendency toward this end, and to our attaining it. Now, just as these things were never stated in the minds of the community of mankind, but they lived in perpetual confusion, so the inquiries of the philosophers about the chief end of man, the nature of felicity or blessedness, and the way of attaining it, are nothing but so many uncertain and fierce digladiations. [15]

No one truth is asserted in these, nor is any one duty prescribed, that is not spoiled and vitiated [16] by its circumstances and ends. Besides, they never rose to so much as a surmise about the most important matters of religion – without which, it is demonstrable by reason that it is impossible for us to ever attain the end for which we were made, or the blessedness of which we are capable. They could never give any account of our apostasy from God, or the depravation of our nature — of the cause or necessary cure of it. In this lost and wandering condition of mankind, the Scripture presents itself as a light, rule, and guide for all, to direct them in their whole course to their end, and to bring them to the enjoyment of God. And it does this with such clearness and evidence, as to dispel all the darkness, and put an end to all the confusion of the minds of men (as the sun does with the shades of the night, by rising) — unless they wilfully shut their eyes against it, "loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Joh 3.19 For all of the confusion of the minds of men — to extricate themselves from which, they searched out and immixed themselves in endless questions, to no purpose — arose from their ignorance of what we were originally; of what we now are, and how we came to be so; by what way or means we may be delivered or relieved; what are the duties of life, or what is required of us in order to live to God as our highest end; and what the blessedness of our nature consists in. All the world was never able to give a satisfactory and tolerable answer to any one of these inquiries. Yet, unless they are all infallibly determined, we are not capable of the least rest or happiness above the beasts that perish. But now, all these things are so clearly declared and stated in the Scripture, that it comes with an evidence, like a light from heaven, on the minds and consciences of unprejudiced persons:

- What was the condition of our nature in its first creation and constitution, with the blessedness and advantage of that condition;
- How we fell from it, and what was the cause;
- What is the nature, and what are the consequences and effects, of our present depravation and apostasy from God;
- How help and relief is provided for us in this, by infinite wisdom, grace, and bounty;
- What that help is, and how we may be interested in it and made partakers of it;
- What is that system of duties, or course of obedience to God, which is required of us, and in which our eternal felicity consists;

— All these are so plainly and clearly revealed in the Scripture, as to generally leave mankind no ground for doubt, inquiry, or conjecture. Set aside inveterate prejudices from tradition and education, false notions into whose mould the mind is cast, the love of sin, and the conduct of lust — things which have an inconceivable power over the minds, souls, and affections of men — and the light of the Scripture in these things will be like that of the noon-day sun.

It closes the way to all further inquiry, and efficaciously necessitates an acquiescence in it. And in particular — in that direction which it gives to the lives of men, for that obedience which they owe to God, and that reward which they expect from him — there is no conceivable instance of anything that is conducive to this, which is not prescribed in the Scripture; nor is there anything which is contrary to it, that does not fall under its prohibition. Therefore, those whose desire or interest is that the bounds and differences of good and evil should be unfixed and confounded; who are afraid to know what they were, what they are, or what they will come to;

who care to know neither God nor themselves, neither their duty nor their reward — may despise this book, and deny its divine origin. Others will retain a sacred veneration of it, as the offspring of God.

4. The *testimony of the church* may in like manner be pleaded to the same purpose. And I will also insist on it, partly to manifest what its true nature and efficacy consist in; and partly to evince the vanity of the old pretense that even we, who departed from the church of Rome, receive the Scripture on that church's authority. From this it is further pretended that, on the same ground and reason, we ought to receive whatever else that church proposes to us.

(1.) The church is said to be the *pillar and ground of truth*, 1Tim 3.15, This is the only text pleaded with any sobriety to give countenance to the assertion that the authority of the Scripture, with respect to us, depends on the authority of the church. But the weakness of a plea to that purpose has been so fully manifested by many already, that it does not need to be insisted on. In short, the church cannot be so much the pillar and ground of truth, that the truth should be built and rest upon the church as its foundation, as it were. For this is directly contrary to the same apostle, who teaches us that the church itself is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone," Eph 2.20. The church cannot be the ground of truth, and truth be the ground of the church, in the same sense or kind. Therefore, the church is the pillar and ground of truth, in that it holds up and declares the Scriptures and the things contained in it, to be so.

(2.) In receiving anything from a church, we may consider its *authority*, or its *ministry*. By the authority of the church in this matter, we intend no more than the weight and importance that is found in its testimony; for

testimonies vary according to the worth, gravity, honesty, honor, and reputation of those by whom they are given.

It is a foolish imagination to suppose that there is an authority, properly so called, in any church, or in all the churches of the world, on which our reception of the Scripture should depend, as that which gives it authority towards us, and is a sufficient warranty to our faith. For the authority and truth of God do not stand in need of, nor are they capable of, any such attestation from men. All they will admit from the children of men, is that they humbly submit to them, and testify of their doing so, with the reasons for it. The ministry of the church in this matter is that duty by which it proposes and declares to all the world that the Scripture is the word of God, and to do so as it has occasion. This ministry may be considered either *formally*, as it is appointed by God for this end, and blessed by him; or *materially* only, as the thing is done — though the grounds on which it is done and the manner of doing it are not divinely approved.

We wholly deny that we ever received the Scripture on the ***authority*** of the church of Rome, in any sense whatsoever. The reasons for this will be mentioned shortly. But it may be granted that, together with the ministry of other churches in the world, and many other providential means of their preservation and successive communication, we *de facto* received the Scriptures by the ***ministry*** of the church of Rome, seeing that they also were in possession of them. But this ministry we allow only in the latter sense, as an actual *means* in subservience to God's providence, without respect to any special institution.

And for the authority of the church in this case, in that sense in which it is allowed — namely, as denoting the weight and importance of a testimony which, being strengthened by all sorts of circumstances, may be said to

have great authority in it — we must be careful to whom or to what church we grant or allow it. For let men assume whatever names or titles they please, if most of them are corrupt or flagitious in their lives, and have great secular advantages which they highly prize and studiously improve [17] — things which they suppose and profess the Scripture supplies them with — call them a church or whatever you please, their testimony in this is of very little value. For all men may see that they have an earthly, worldly interest of their own in this. And it will be said that if such persons knew the whole Bible was a fable (as one pope expressed himself), they would not forego its profession, unless they could better advantage themselves in the world another way. Therefore, it is manifest to all, that those who conduct the Roman church have made, and continue to make for themselves, great earthly, temporal advantages in honor, power, wealth, and reputation in the world, by their profession of the Scripture. And thus their testimony may rationally be supposed to be so far influenced by self-interest, as to be of little validity.

Therefore, the testimony which I intend is that of multitudes of persons of unspotted reputation on all other accounts in the world — those who are free from all possibility of impeachment as to any designed evil or conspiracy among themselves, with respect to any corrupt end. Not having the least secular advantage by what they testified to, they were absolutely secured against all exceptions which either common reason or common usage among mankind can put to any witness whatever. And to evidence the force that is in this consideration, I will briefly represent,

[1.] Who they were that gave and give this testimony, in some special instances;

[2.] What they gave this testimony to;

[3.] How they did so, or by what means.

[1.] To be considered in the first place, is the testimony of those by whom the several books of the Scripture were written. All of them, severally and jointly, witnessed that what they wrote was received by *inspiration from God*. This is pleaded by the apostle Peter in the name of them all:

"We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. We also have a more sure word of prophecy, to which you do well that you take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy did not come in olden times by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2Pet 1.16-21.

This is the concurrent testimony of the writers both of the Old Testament and the New — namely, that just as they had certain knowledge of the things they wrote, so their writing was by inspiration from God. So, in particular, John bears witness to his Revelation, chapter 19.9, 22.6: "These are the true and faithful sayings of God." What weight is to be laid on this is declared in Joh 21.24, "This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true." He testified to the truth of what he wrote; but how was it known to the church intended there ("*We* know that his testimony is true") — that it was true indeed? He was not absolutely *autopistos*, or "one that was to be believed, merely on

his own account." Yet here it is spoken in the name of the church, with the highest assurance, "We *know* that his testimony is true."

I answer, their assurance did not arise merely from his moral or natural endowments, or holy counsels, but from the evidence they had of his divine inspiration, which we will treat afterward.

The particular things pleaded to give force to this testimony are all that such a testimony is capable of; and they are so many that they would require a large discourse by itself to propose, discuss, and confirm them. But supposing the testimony they gave, and in compliance with my own design, I will reduce the evidences of its truth to these two considerations:

1*st*. Of their *persons*; and,

2*dly*. Of the *manner* of their writing:

1*st*. As to their *persons*, they were absolutely removed from all possible suspicion of deceiving or being deceived. The wit of all the atheistic spirits in the world is not able to fix on any one thing that would be a tolerable ground for any such suspicion concerning the integrity of witnesses, if such a testimony could be given in any other case. And surmises in things of this nature, which have no pleadable ground for them, are to be looked at as diabolical suggestions or atheistic dreams — or at best, they are the false imaginations of weak and distempered minds:

- the nature and design of their work;
- their unconcern with all secular interests;
- their unacquaintance with one another;
- the times and places in which the things reported by them were done;
- the facility of convincing them of falsehood if what they wrote (which is the fountain of all else they taught) was not in fact true;

- the evident certainty that this would have been done, arising from the known desire, ability, will, and interest of their adversaries to do so, if it had been possible to effect it — seeing that this would have secured for their adversaries the victory in the conflicts in which they were violently engaged;
- it would have put an immediate end to all that difference and uproar in the world about their doctrine;
- their harmony among themselves, without any conspiracy or antecedent agreement;
- the miseries which they underwent, most of them without hope of relief or recompense in this world, on the sole account of the doctrine taught by themselves;
- with all those other innumerable circumstances that are pleadable to evince the sincerity and integrity of any witnesses whatsoever;

— these all concur to prove that they did not follow cunningly-devised fables in what they declared concerning the mind and will of God as immediately received from him. To confront this evidence with bare surmises, incapable of any rational countenance or confirmation, is only to manifest what brutish impudence, infidelity, and atheism, are forced to retreat to for shelter.

2*dly*. Their *style* or *manner* of writing deserves special consideration; for there are impressed on it all those characteristics of a divine origin that can be communicated to such an outward *adjunct of divine revelation*.

Notwithstanding the distance of the ages and seasons in which they lived, the difference of the languages in which they wrote, the great variety of their roles, abilities, education, and other circumstances, there is yet, on the whole and on all parts of their writing, such gravity, majesty, and authority,

mixed with plainness of speech, and absolute freedom from any appearance of an affectation of esteem, or applause, or anything else that derives from human frailty — that it must excite an admiration in all those who seriously consider them. But I have elsewhere insisted at large on this consideration. [18] And in the same place, I have shown that no other writings extant in the world, which ever pretended to a divine origin — such as the apocryphal books under the Old Testament, and some fragments of spurious pieces pretended to be written in the days of the apostles — that are not sufficient for their own conviction. They openly reveal their own vain pretensions, not only from their *matter*, but from the *manner* of their writing, and the plain footsteps of human artifice and weakness in it. So must everything necessarily do which, being merely human, pretends to an immediate derivation from God. When men have done all they can, these things will have as evident a difference between them, as there is between the wheat and the chaff, or between real and painted fire, Jer 23.28-29. [19]

We must add to the testimony of the divine writers themselves, the testimony of those who in all ages have *believed in Christ through their word* — which is the description which the Lord Jesus Christ gives of his church in Joh 17.20. This is the church — that is, both those who wrote the Scripture, and those who believe in Christ through their word, through all ages — which bears witness to the divine origin of the Scripture; and it may be added that *we* know this witness is true. I would rather risk my faith and eternal condition with these, than with any society, any real or pretended church whatsoever. And among these, there is a special consideration to be had of those innumerable multitudes who, in primitive times, witnessed this confession all the world over. For they had many advantages above us to know the certainty of various matters of fact which the verity of our religion

depends upon. And we are directed to a special regard for their testimony, which is signalized by Christ himself. In the great judgment that is to be passed on the world, the first appearance is of "the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," Rev 20.4; and at present, there is a special regard for them in heaven on account of their witness and testimony, Rev 6.9-11. These were the ones who, with the loss of their lives by the sword and other ways of violence, gave testimony to the truth of the word of God.

And to reduce these things to a natural consideration, who can have the least occasion to suspect all those persons of folly, weakness, gullibility, wickedness, or conspiracy among themselves, which such a diffuse multitude was absolutely incapable of? Nor can any man undervalue their testimony unless he complies with their adversaries against them, with those who were known generally to be of the worst of men. And who is there that believes there is a God and an eternal future state, that would not rather have his soul with Paul than with Nero, with the holy martyrs than with their bestial persecutors? Therefore, this suffrage and testimony, begun from the first writing of the Scripture, and carried on by the best of men in all ages, and made conspicuously glorious in the primitive times of Christianity, must be unavoidably cogent with all wise men — at least for a due and sedate consideration of what they bear witness to — and sufficient to scatter all those prejudices which atheism or profaneness may raise or suggest.

[2.] *What* it was they gave *testimony* to is to be duly considered. And this was not only that the book of Scripture was good, holy, and true, in all its contents, but that the whole and every part of it was given by *divine inspiration, as* their faith in this matter is expressed, 2Pet 1.20-21. On this

account, and no other, they themselves received the Scripture, and also believed and yielded obedience to the things contained in it. Nor would they admit their testimony was received except as the word which is immediately spoken by God himself, even if the whole world was content to allow or obey the Scripture on any other or lower terms — nor will God himself allow an assent to the Scripture under any other conception. Hence, those who refuse to give credit to it are said to "belie the Lord and say, It is not He," Jer 5.12; yes, to "make God a liar," 1Joh 5.10. If all mankind were to agree together to receive and make use of this book,

- as that which taught nothing except what is good, useful, and profitable to human society;
- as that which is a complete directory to men in all that they need to believe or do towards God;
- as the best means under heaven to make them settled, satisfied, and assured of the knowledge of God and themselves;
- as the safest guide to eternal blessedness;
- and therefore, that it must have been written and composed by persons who were wise, holy, and honest above all comparison, and
- they had that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary to such an undertaking;

— yet, all this does not correspond to the testimony given of the Scriptures by the church of believers in all ages. It was not lawful for them, and it is not lawful for us, to so compound this matter with the world. The whole Scripture was given by inspiration from God — it was *his* word, *his* true and faithful sayings — *this* was what they gave testimony to in the first place; and we are also obliged to do so.

They never pretended to any other assurance of the things they professed, nor did they give any other reason of their faith and obedience than this: that the Scripture in which all these things are contained, was given immediately from God, or was his word. And therefore, those who gave up their Bibles to persecutors, were always esteemed no less traitors to Christianity, [20] than those who denied Jesus Christ.

[3.] The *manner in which* this testimony was given adds to its importance; for —

1*st*. Many of them, especially at some times, gave their testimony with various *miraculous operations*. Our apostle pleads this as corroboration of the witness to its truths, given by the first preachers of the gospel, Heb 2.4; [21] the same was done by all the apostles together, Acts 5.32. [22] It must be granted that these miracles were not worked immediately to confirm this single truth, that the Scripture was given by inspiration of God; but that the end of miracles is to be an immediate witness from heaven, or it is God's attestation to their persons and ministry by whom these miracles were worked. His presence with them and approval of their doctrine were publicly declared by them. But the miracles worked by the Lord Christ and his apostles, by which God gave immediate testimony to the divine mission of their persons, and the infallible truth of their doctrine, might either not have been written (as most of them were not),[Joh 21.25] or they might have been written and their doctrine recorded in books not given by inspiration from God. Besides, as to the miracles worked by Christ himself, and most of those of the apostles, they were worked among those by whom the books of the Old Testament were acknowledged as the oracles of God, and before the writing of those books of the New Testament; so that they could not be worked to immediately confirm one or the other. Nor do we have any

infallible testimony concerning these miracles except the Scripture itself, in which they are recorded. Thus it is necessary that we believe the Scripture is infallibly true, *before* we can believe on infallible grounds that the miracles recorded in it are true. This is why I grant that the whole force of this consideration lies in this alone: that those who gave testimony to the Scripture, that it is the word of God, had an attestation given to their ministry by these miraculous operations, concerning which we have good collateral security also.

2*dly*. Many of them confirmed their testimony with their *sufferings*. They were not only witnesses but *martyrs*, in the specific *church notion* of that word, grounded on the Scripture, Acts 22.20; Rev 2.13, 17.6. [23]

They were so far from having any worldly advantage by the profession they made, and the testimony they gave, that to confirm these, they willingly and cheerfully underwent whatever is evil, dreadful, or destructive to human nature in all its temporary concerns. It is therefore unquestionable that they had the highest assurance of the truth in these things, which the mind of man is capable of. The management of this argument is the principal design of the apostle in the whole 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. For he declared the nature of faith in general — namely, that it is the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," verse 1. That is, there is an assent to and confidence in invisible things that are not capable of demonstration from sense or reason, as it respects divine revelation only; and it is into this revelation alone that faith is resolved. For our encouragement and establishment in this, the apostle produces a long catalogue of those who did, suffered, and obtained great things by faith. What he principally insists on is the hardships, miseries, cruelties, tortures, and several sorts of deaths which they underwent, especially from verse 33

to the end. He calls them a "cloud of witnesses," with which "we are compassed about," Heb 12.1, giving testimony to what we believe — that is, to divine revelation, and in a special manner, to the promises contained in it. And this is for our encouragement in the same duty, as he declares there. [24] And certainly what was thus testified to in such a way and manner, by so many great, wise, and holy persons, has as great an outward evidence of its truth, as anything of that nature is capable of in this world.

3*dly*. They did not give their testimony casually, or on some *extraordinary occasion* only, or by some *one solemn act*, or in some *one certain way*, as other testimonies are or can be given. But they gave their testimony in this cause in their whole course, in all that they *thought*, *spoke*, or *did* in the world, and in the whole disposal of their ways, lives, and actions — as every true believer continues to do at this day. For when a man is occasionally called on to give a *verbal testimony* to the divine origin of the Scripture, in the meantime ordering the whole course of his life — his hopes, designs, aims, and ends — without any eminent respect or regard to it, then his testimony is of no value; nor can it have any influence on the minds of sober and considerate men.

But when men manifest and evince that the declaration of the mind of God in the Scripture has a sovereign divine authority over their souls and consciences, absolutely and in all things, then their witness is cogent and efficacious. There is to me a thousand times more force and weight in the testimony of some holy persons to this purpose, than in the verbal declaration of the most splendid, populous church in the world, which does not evidence such an inward sense of the power and efficacy of God's word. Such holy persons universally and in all things, with respect to this world and their future eternal condition, in all their thoughts, words, actions, and

ways, really experience in themselves and express to others, the power and authority of this word of God in their souls and consciences — living, doing, suffering, and dying in peace, in assurance of mind, and with consolation from that word.

There is, therefore, such force in the real testimony which has been given in all ages, by all persons of this sort — not one excepted — to the divine authority of the Scripture, that it is highly arrogant for anyone to question the truth of it without evident convictions of its imposture;[25] which no person of any tolerable sobriety ever yet pretended to.

5. I will add, in the last place, the consideration of that *success* which the *doctrine* — derived solely from the Scripture, and resolved into it — has had in the world on the minds and lives of men, especially upon the *first preaching* of the gospel. Two things on this success immediately offer themselves for our consideration:

(1.) The *persons* by whom this doctrine was successfully carried on in the world; and,

(2.) The *way and manner* of its propagation;

The Scripture takes notice of of both these in particular, as evidences of that *divine power* which the word was really accompanied with.

(1.) As to their outward condition in the world, the persons to whom this work was committed (I mean the apostles and first evangelists) were poor, lowly, and despised in every way. And as to the endowments of their minds, they were destitute of all those abilities and advantages which might give them either reputation or probability of success in such an undertaking.

The Jews marked this about them with contempt, Acts 4.13;[26] and the Gentiles also generally despised them on the same account. They afforded our apostle no better a title than "babbler," Act 17.18. And so, for a long

time they kept up the public vogue in the world, that Christianity was the religion of idiots and illiterate men. But God had another design in this order of things, which our apostle declares upon admitting the inconsiderable lowliness of those to whom the dispensation of the gospel was committed: 2Cor 4.7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us." The reason why God would make use of such instruments in so great a work was that, through their lowliness, His own glorious power might be more conspicuous. There is nothing more common among men, or more natural to them, than to admire the excellencies of those of their own race and kind, and a willingness to have all evidences of a divine, supernatural power clouded and hidden from them. Therefore, if such persons had been employed as instruments in this work — those whose powers, abilities, qualifications, and endowments, might have been pretended as sufficient, and as the immediate causes of such an effect — there would have been no observation of the divine power and glory of God. But the one who is not able to discern these things in bringing about so mighty a work, by means that are so disproportionate to it, is under the power of the unrelievable prejudices which are intimated by our apostle in such a case, 2Cor 4.3-4. [27]

(2.) The means which were to be used to this end — namely, *subduing the world* to the faith and obedience of the gospel, and thus erecting the spiritual kingdom of Christ in the minds of men who before were under the power and dominion of his adversary — must either be *force* and *arms*, or else *eloquence* in plausible and persuasive reasonings. And mighty works have been worked by both one and the other. By the former, empires have been set up and established in the world, and the superstition of Mohammed has been imposed on many nations. And the latter has also had great effects

on the minds of many. Therefore, it might have been expected that those who had engaged themselves in so great a design and work as that mentioned, would take one or the other of these means and ways. For the wit of man cannot contrive any way to such an end, except what may be reduced to one of these two, seeing that no other way can be imagined, either on the principles of nature, or on the rules of human wisdom or policy.

Yet *both these ways* were abandoned by the apostles and evangelists; and they declared against the use of either of them. For as to outward force, power, and authority, they had none — the use of all carnal weapons was utterly inconsistent with this work and design. As to the other way — of persuasive orations, of enticing words, of alluring arts and eloquence, with like effects of human wisdom and skill — these were all studiously declined by them in this work, as things extremely prejudicial to its success, 1Cor 2.4-5. [28] But they resorted to this alone: they went up and down, preaching to Jews and Gentiles "that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again, according to the Scriptures," 1Cor 15.3-4. And they did this by virtue of those spiritual gifts which were the hidden powers of the world to come, whose nature, virtue, and power, others were utterly unacquainted with. This preaching of theirs, this *preaching of the cross*, both for its subject-matter and manner — without art, eloquence, or oratory — was looked at as a marvellous foolish thing, a sweaty kind of babbling, by all those who had any reputation for learning or cunning among men. Our apostle discusses this at large in 1Cor 1.17-31. In this state of things, everything was under as many improbabilities of success, for all rational conjectures, as can be conceived. Besides, together with the doctrine of the gospel that they preached (which was new and uncouth [29] to the world), they taught

observances of religious worship — in meetings, assemblies, or conventicles [30] to that end — which all the laws in the world prohibited, Acts 16.21, 18.13. [31]

Upon this, no sooner did the rulers and governors of the world begin to take notice of them and what they did, than they judged that it all tended to sedition, and that commotions would ensue from it. These things enraged most of mankind against them and their converts, and therefore made havoc of them with incredible fury. Yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, and against all these oppositions, their doctrine prevailed to subdue the world to obey it. There may be added to all these things, one or two considerations from the state of things in the world at that time, which signalize the quality of this work, and manifest that it was of God; such as —

[1.] In the New Testament, its writers constantly categorize all those they had to deal with in this world, into *Jews* and *Greeks* (which we render *Gentiles*). The other nations of the world came under that latter designation because of their preeminence on various accounts. Now, the Jews at that time were, *in solidum*, [32] possessed of all the true religion that was in the world. They boasted of this as their privilege, exalting themselves with the thought and reputation of it, everywhere and on all occasions. At that time, it was their great business to gain proselytes to it, which their honor and advantage also depended on. The Greeks, on the other side, were in as full a possession of arts, sciences, literature, and all that which the world calls "wisdom," as the Jews were of religion. And they too had a religion, received by a long tradition of their fathers from time immemorial, which they had variously cultivated and dressed with mysteries and ceremonies to their own complete satisfaction.

Besides this, the Romans, who were the ruling part of the Gentiles, ascribed to their gods and the religious worship they gave them, all their prosperity, and the whole raising of their stupendous empire. Thus it was a fundamental maxim in their policy and rule, that they should prosper or decay according to how well they observed or were negligent in the religion they received. Indeed, not only those who owned the true God and his providence, but (before idolatry and superstition had given way to atheism) all people solemnly imputed all their achievements and successes to their gods, as the prophet says of the Chaldeans, Hab 1.11. [33] And the one who first undertook to record the exploits of the nations of the world, constantly assigns all their good and evil to their gods, as they were pleased or provoked. The Romans, especially, boasted that their religion was the cause of their prosperity: "It is in piety only and religion, and the wisdom of regarding the providence of the immortal gods as that which rules and governs all things, that we have surpassed all nations and peoples," says their great orator. [34]

And Dionysius of Halicarnassus, [35] a great and wise historian, giving an account of the religion of the Romans and the ceremonies of their worship, affirms that he does it to this end: "that those who have been ignorant of the Roman piety should cease to wonder at their prosperity and successes in all their wars, seeing that, because of their religion, they always had the gods propitious and succorable to them," *Antiq. Rom*., lib. ii. The consideration of this made them so obstinate in their adherence to their present religion, that when, after many ages and hundreds of years, some books of Numa (their second king, and principal establisher of their commonwealth), were occasionally found, instead of paying them any respect, they ordered them to be burnt, because the one who had perused them took his oath that they

were contrary to their present worship and devotion! And on the decline of their empire, after the prevalence of the Christian religion, those who were obstinate in their Paganism reflected severely upon the Christians; they fiercely avowed that the relinquishment of their old religion was the cause of all their calamities. It was in answer to this calumny, principally, that Austin wrote his excellent discourse, *De Civitate Dei*. [36]

In this state of things, the preachers of the gospel come among them. They not only bring a new doctrine, under all the disadvantages mentioned before (and moreover, the one who was the head of it was newly crucified as a malefactor, by the present powers of the earth), but also such a doctrine that was to expressly take away the religion from the Jews, and the wisdom from the Greeks, and the principal maxim of polity from the Romans, on which they thought they had raised their empire! It would be easy to declare how all those sects were engaged in worldly interest, honor, reputation, and principles of safety — to oppose, decry, condemn, and reject, this new doctrine. If a company of sorry craftsmen was able to fill a whole city with tumult and uproar against the gospel, as they did when they thought it would bring decay to their trade (Acts 19.23-41), then what can we think was done in all the world by all those who were engaged and enraged by *higher* provocations? To the Jews, it was like death to part with their religion, on account of the conviction they had of its truth, and also the honor they thought to accrue by it. And the Greeks were raised to the highest indignation by having that wisdom which they and their forefathers had been laboring in for so many generations, now be entirely rejected as an impertinent foolery by the sorry preachments of a few illiterate persons. And the Romans were wise enough to secure the fundamental maxim of their state.

Therefore, the world seemed sufficiently fortified against the admission of this new and strange doctrine, on the terms on which it was proposed. There can be no danger, surely, that it would ever obtain considerable progress. But we know that things fell out quite otherwise. Religion, wisdom, and power, with honor, profit, interest, and reputation, were all forced to give way to its power and efficacy.

[2.] The world at that time was in the highest enjoyment of *peace, prosperity, and plenty*, that it had ever attained since the entrance of sin. It is known how, from all these things, *provision* is usually made *for the flesh to fulfil its lusts*.[Rom 13.14] Whatever the pride, ambition, covetousness, or sensuality of anyone, that could carry them to lust after these things, the world was full of satisfactions for them. And so most men lived in the eager pursuit of their lusts, in full supply of what they required. In this condition, the gospel is preached to them — requiring at once and indispensably, a renunciation of all those worldly lusts which before had been the salt of their lives. If men designed any compliance with it or interest in it, then their pride, ambition, luxury, covetousness, sensuality, malice, and revenge, must all be mortified and rooted up. If it had only been a new doctrine and religion, declaring such a knowledge and worship of God that they had never heard of before, they could not help being very wary in entertaining it. But when it required, at the first instant, that for its sake they should "pull out their right eyes, and cut off their right hands," [37] — to part with all that was dear and useful to them, and which had such a prevalent interest in their minds and affections (as corrupt lusts are known to have) — this could only invincibly fortify them *against* its admittance. Yet this also was forced to give way; and all the fortifications of Satan in this were thrown to the ground by the power of the word, as our apostle expresses it, 2Cor 10.4-

5. [38] There he gives an account of that warfare by which the world was subdued to Christ by the gospel. Now, a man who has a mind to make himself an instance of conceited folly and pride, may talk as though there was no evidence in all this of divine power giving testimony to the Scripture and the doctrine contained in it. But its characteristics are so legible to every modest and sedate view, that they leave no room for doubt or hesitation.

But the force of this whole argument is liable to one exception of no small moment. Therefore, this must necessarily be taken notice of and removed. Because we plead the power, efficacy, and prevalence of the gospel in former days as a demonstration of its divine origin, it may be asked,

"Why it is that it is not still accompanied with the same power, nor does it produce the same effects? For we see that its profession is now confined to narrow limits in comparison to what it formerly extended itself to. Nor do we find that it gains ground anywhere in the world; rather, it is more and more restricted every day.

Therefore, either the first prevalence that it was asserted to have, and which is argued as evidence of its divinity, indeed proceeded from some *other* accidental causes, in an efficacious though unseen concurrence, and *not* by an emanation of power from itself; or else the gospel is not at present what it was formerly, seeing that it does not have the same effect or power over the minds of men that it had of old. We may therefore suspend pleading this argument from what was formerly done by the gospel, lest it reflect a disadvantage on what we profess at present."

Ans. 1. Whatever *different events* may fall out in *different seasons*, the gospel is the same as it ever was from the beginning. Another book, containing another doctrine, has not crept into the world instead of what

was once delivered to the saints. And whatever various apprehensions men may have through their weakness or prejudices, concerning the things taught in this book, they are in themselves absolutely the same as they ever were, without the loss or change of a material word or syllable in the manner of their delivery. I have proved this elsewhere, and it is capable of the most evident demonstration. Therefore, however this gospel is entertained at present in the world, its former prevalence may be pleaded in justification of its divine origin.

Ans. 2. The *cause of this event lies principally in the sovereign will and pleasure of God*. For although the Scripture is his word, and he has testified to this by his power that was put forth and exerted in its dispensations to men, yet that divine power is not included or shut up in the *letter* of it, so that it must have the *same effect* wherever it comes. We do not plead that there is absolutely in itself, in its doctrine, in the preaching or preachers of it, such a power that it would naturally and physically produce the effects mentioned. Rather, it is an instrument in the hand of God for that work which is his own; and he exerts his power in it and by it as it seems good to him. And if at any time he so puts forth his divine power in its administration, or in the use of this instrument, that its great worth and excellence manifests itself as being from him, then he gives a sufficient attestation of it. Therefore, the times and seasons of the prevalence of the gospel in the world are in the hand and at the sovereign disposal of God. He is not obliged to accompany it with the same power at all times and seasons (for "who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?"), Rom 11.34 and so the *evidence* of his own power going along with it at any time, while under an open claim of a divine origin, is an irrepressible approval of it. Thus, at the first preaching of the word, to fulfil

the promises made to the fathers from the foundation of the world, and to glorify his Son Jesus Christ and the gospel which he had revealed, He put forth that effectual divine power in its administration, by which the world was subdued to its obedience.

And the time will come when he will revive that same work of power and grace, to retrieve the world into subjection to Jesus Christ. In these latter ages, God does not do as he did formerly, causing the gospel to run and prosper among those nations of the world which have not yet received it. Yet, considering the state of things at present among mankind generally, its preservation in that small remnant by whom it is obeyed in sincerity, is no less a glorious evidence of his presence with it, and his care over it, than its eminent propagation was in days of old.

3. The *righteousness of God* is in like manner to be considered in these things. For though he had granted the inestimable privilege of his word to many nations, they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness,[Rom 1.18] through their horrible ingratitude and wickedness; so that the continuance of the gospel among them was in no way to the glory of God, nor yet to their own advantage. For neither nations nor persons will ever be advantaged by an outward profession of the gospel while they live in contradiction and disobedience to its precepts; indeed, nothing can be more pernicious to the souls of men. God at this day is revenging this impiety on the nations of the world, having utterly cast off many of them from the knowledge of the truth, and having given up others to "strong delusions to believe lies," [2Thes 2.11] though they retain the Scriptures and an outward profession of Christianity. How far he may proceed in the same way of righteous vengeance towards other nations also, we do not know; but we ought to tremble in the consideration of it.

When God first granted the gospel to the world, mankind generally, had greatly sinned against the light of nature, and had rejected all those supernatural revelations that had been made to them at any time; yet they had not sinned against the gospel itself nor its grace. It pleased God, therefore, to wink at and pass over that time of ignorance; thus his justice would not be provoked by any of their former sins, to withhold from them the efficacy of his divine power in the administration of the gospel by which he "called them to repentance." But now, after the gospel has been sufficiently tendered to all nations, and been rejected by most of them — either as to its profession or its power, with the obedience it requires — things are quite otherwise stated. It is from the "righteous judgment of God," revenging the sins of the world against the gospel itself, that so many nations are deprived of it, and so many are left obstinate in its refusal. Thus, the present state of things in no way weakens or prejudices the evidence given to the Scripture by that mighty power of God which accompanied the administration of it in the world. There are secret reasons of sovereign wisdom, and there are open causes in divine justice, for what has since fallen out, and to which it is to be assigned.

I have briefly recalled these things, not as though they were all that may be pleaded of this kind, but only to give some *instances* of those *external arguments* by which the divine authority of the Scripture may be confirmed.

Now, these arguments are able of themselves to produce in the minds of men — those who are sober, humble, intelligent, and unprejudiced — a firm opinion, judgment, and persuasion that the Scripture proceeds from God. Some men are prepossessed with invincible prejudices, contracted by a course of education in which they imbibed principles opposite and contrary to this. And they have increased and fortified these prejudices by some

fixed and hereditary enmity against all those whom they know would admit the divinity of the Scripture. This is how it is with Mohammedans and some of the Indians. In such cases, these arguments may not prevail to immediately work or effect their assent. It is this way with those who, out of a love for and delight in those ways of vice, sin, and wickedness which are absolutely and severely condemned in the Scripture, and are without the least hope of exemption for those who continue under their power — they will not take these arguments into due consideration. Such persons may talk about and discuss them, but they never weigh them as seriously as the importance of the cause requires. For if men would examine them as they should, it must be with a sober judgment that their eternal condition depends on a right determination of this inquiry. But for those who can scarcely get free from the service and power of their lusts, to seriously consider what their condition is, or what it is likely to be, it is no wonder if they talk about these things in the manner of these days, without any impression on their minds and affections, nor influence on their practical understanding. But our inquiry is about what is a sufficient evidence to convict rational and unprejudiced persons, and to defeat objections to the contrary. These and similar arguments answer them in every way.

Some think it fit to stay here — that is, in these or similar external arguments, or in rational *motives for faith*, that would render the Scriptures so credible that it is unreasonable not to assent to them.

"That *certainty* which may be attained upon these arguments and motives is," they say, "the highest which our minds are capable of with respect to this object. And therefore it includes all the *assent* which is required of us for this proposition that 'the Scriptures are the word of God;' or all the faith by which we believe them to be the word of God."

When I speak of these arguments, I do not intend those *alone* which I have rested on, but also all others of the same kind, some of which have been urged and improved by others with great diligence. For in the variety of those arguments which offer themselves in this cause, everyone chooses what seems most cogent to him; and some amass all that they can think of. Now, these arguments, with the evidence tendered in them, are such that nothing but *perverse prejudice can* detain men from giving a *firm assent* to them. And no more is required of us than — according to the *motives* that are proposed to us, and the *arguments* that are used to that purpose — we come to a judgment and persuasion (called a *moral assurance*) of the truth of the Scripture, and endeavor to yield obedience to God accordingly.

It could be wished that more people than it is feared there are, were really so affected by these arguments and motives; for the truth is, *tradition* and *education* bear practically the whole sway in this matter. Yet, when all is done, it must be said that this is but a mere *natural work*, for which no more is required than the *natural exercise* and acting of our *own reason* and understanding; or that the arguments and motives used, though strong, are *human and fallible* — and therefore the conclusion we draw from them is also fallible — and thus we may be deceived in it; or that an assent which is grounded and resolved in such *rational arguments* only, is not *faith* in the Scriptural sense. In brief, it is required that we *believe the Scriptures are the word of God with divine and supernatural faith*, which cannot be deceived. [39]

Two things are replied to this requirement:

Obj.1. "Where the things to be believed are divine and supernatural, so is the faith by which we believe or give our assent to them. Whatever kind the motives and arguments are, on which we give our assent, if that assent is

true and real, and the things believed are divine and supernatural, then the faith by which we believe will also be divine and supernatural."

But this is all the same thing. It is as if saying, in natural things, that our sight is green when what we see is green, and it is blue when what we see is blue. And this would be so in moral things also, if the acts specified were from their *material* objects. But it is certain that they are *not* always of the same nature as the things they concern; nor are they changed by that nature from what their own nature is in themselves — whether natural or supernatural, human or divine. Now, divine things are only the *material* object of our faith, as shown before. And by enumerating them, we answer the question, "*What* do you believe?" But it is the *formal* object of (or reason of) all our acts, from which they are designated, or by which they are specified. And the formal reason of our faith, assent, or believing, is what prevails with us to believe, and on whose account we believe, and with which we answer the question, "*Why* do you believe?"

If this reason is human authority — where the arguments are highly probable but absolutely fallible, and the motives are cogent but they only produce a moral persuasion — then whatever we believe on that basis, our faith will be human, fallible, and a moral assurance only.

Therefore it is said —

Obj. 2. "This *assent is* sufficient; it is all that is required of us, and it contains all the *assurance* our minds are capable of in this matter. For no further evidence or assurance is to be sought, in any case, than the subject-matter will bear. And so it is in this case, where the truth is not exposed to sense, nor capable of scientific demonstration. Rather, it must be received upon those reasons and arguments which carry it above the highest

probability, even though they leave it beneath science, or knowledge, or infallible assurance (if there *is* such a persuasion of mind)."

Yet I must say that there are external arguments by which learned and rational men have proved, or may yet further prove, that the Scripture is a divine revelation given by God, and the doctrine contained in it is a heavenly truth. They are of singular use for strengthening the faith of those who believe, by relieving their minds against temptations and objections that will arise to the contrary, and also to convict gainsayers. [40] Yet to say that they contain the formal reason of that assent which is required of us, that the Scripture is the word of God — or to say that our faith is the effect and product of those arguments, and that it rests upon and is resolved into them — is contrary to the Scripture. It is destructive of the nature of divine faith, and exclusive of the work of the Holy Ghost in this whole matter.

Therefore, I will do two things before I proceed to the design of our principal argument:

1. I will give a few reasons, proving that the faith by which we believe the Scripture is the *word* of God, is not a merely a firm and moral persuasion, built on external arguments and motives of credibility; but that our faith is divine and supernatural, because the *formal reason of* that faith is also divine and supernatural.

2. I will show what the *nature of that faith* is, by which we believe or ought to believe the Scripture is the *word* of God; what the work of the Holy Spirit is in this; and what its proper object is.

In the first I will be very brief, for my design is to strengthen the faith of all, and not weaken the opinions of any.

1. *Superfetation*: a second conception on top of an existing conception; as if Scripture had one conception in God, and another superimposed by Man. So we ask, "Is the Bible God's word about Man, or Man's word about God?" Or, "Has God revealed Himself in the Bible, or has Man merely conceived of Him there?" — **2Pet 1:20,** "*no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation*." Other ancient writings (e.g. the Vedas of India 1500-1200 BC, Egyptian Book of the Dead 1550 BC, or Kesh Temple Hymn of Sumer 2600 BC) do not purport to be the revelations of God about Himself.

2. *Petulance*: here it means being immodest; impertinent; or insolent.

3. **Deu 4:6** "Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.' [7] "For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? [8] "And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

4. Rom 1.21; 1Cor 1.21.

5. Hence the assistance of Hiram and his artisans was required to build David's palace and Solomon's temple (2Sam 5.11; 1Kngs 5). Israel was not known for science, engineering, mathematics, astronomy, etc. – Israel knew God. **Jer 9:24** "But let him who glories glory in this: That he understands and knows Me, That I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

6. This attempt to destroy the Bible applies to the Old Testament as well; see Jeremiah 36. Antiochus Epiphanes IV (ca. 166 B.C.), known as “the madman,” launched a bloody persecution against the Hebrew people. He attempted to destroy copies of the Jewish Scriptures: "And they cut in pieces, and burnt with fire the books of the law of God: And every one with whom the books of the testament of the Lord were found, and whoever observed the law of the Lord, they put to death, according to the edict of the king." (1Macc 1:59-60) Josephus writes, "And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found miserably perished also" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.5.4). An effort to eradicate the Bible was initiated by Diocletian. In 303 A.D., he began a mass persecution of Christians: "all assemblies of Christians were forbidden and churches were ordered to be torn down... One edict ordered the burning of every copy of the Bible" (Hurst, *History of the Christian Church*. Vol. 1. NYC, Eaton & Mains.1897, p. 175). The Fourth Rule of the Council of Trent stated that the indiscriminate circulation of the Scriptures in the common tongue would generate “more harm than good.” Therefore, those reading or possessing the Bible “without... permission may not receive absolution from their sins till they have handed them over to the ordinary” (Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1950, p. 274). In 1543 a Parliamentary act was passed forbidding the use of Tyndale’s version, and any reading of the Scriptures in assemblies without royal license (Newman, *A Manual of Church History*. Vol. 2. Philadelphia, PA: ABPS. 1902, p. 262). Thousands of copies were burned. “Of the estimated 18,000 copies printed between 1525-1528, only two fragments are known to remain” (Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic*

Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1949, p. 84). – Wayne Jackson, http://www.chrisiancourier.com

7. *Approbation*: not just approval, but *commendation* – worthy of regard or confidence; or entrusted to someone's care.

8. **Isa 55:11** So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it. **Psa 12:6** The words of the LORD *are* pure words, *Like* silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times. [7] You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever.

9. *Flagitious*: extremely and brutally wicked; atrocious.

10. **Act 17:23** "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

11. *Theologoumena* etc., lib. ii. cap. 1, sect. 11. Owen's *Works*, vol. 17 – a six-book treatise on the nature, rise, progress, and study of theology from the Fall to the present, but in Latin only. In 1817, Lucy Hutchinson authored an excellent abridged translation of the first two books. *Soli Deo Gloria* recently published a flawed translation, titled "Biblical Theology." But *Logos Publications* is now offering a 3-volume set from Lexham Press, "The Latin Works of John Owen." The first volume is *Theologoumena*. – WHG

12. *Ubi supra* [*Theologoumena*], lib. iii. cap. 3, *de origine et progressu idololatriæ*.

13. *Needful*: Necessary for relief or supply; "necessary" points to a requisite condition, rather than requisite needs.

14. Here it implies "lost in translation" as these truths were appropriated from Scripture, and then twisted.
15. *Digladiation*: gladiatorial fighting with swords or hand-to-hand (metaphorically speaking).
16. *Vitiated*: marred or corrupted.
17. *Improve*: use or employ to good purpose; turn to a profitable account.
18. Exercitat. on the Epist. to the Heb., Exer. i.
19. **Jer 23:28** "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What *is* the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. [29] "*Is* not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces?
20. Timothy and Maura had been married only three weeks when the persecution of Emperor Diocletian reached Mauritania in Northern Africa. In A.D. 303, Diocletian had ordered that all Scripture be destroyed. Some Christians complied with the emperor's order and as a result, a new word entered into the vocabulary – traitors (*traditores:* those who delivered). As a deacon, one of Timothy's jobs was to keep the Scriptures; and knowing this, the authorities had him arrested. When Timothy refused to turn over the Scriptures, he was blinded with red hot irons so that, "The books shall at least be useless to you." When, after further torture, Timothy continued his refusal to surrender the scriptures, he and his new bride were crucified. (*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Tenth Perscution, http://www.consider.org/library/which.htm)
21. **Heb 2:3** how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, [4] God also bearing witness both with signs and

wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

22. **Act 5:32** "And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

23. **Act 22:20** 'And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' **Rev 2:13** "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. **Rev 17:6** I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

24. **Heb 12:1** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us [likewise] run with endurance the race that is set before us...

25. *Imposture*: deception or fraud.

26. **Act 4:13** Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

27. **2Cor 4:3** But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [4] whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

28. **1Cor 2:4** And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

29. *Uncouth*: Lacking refinement, cultivation or taste.
30. *Conventicle*: a secret unauthorized meeting for religious worship.
31. **Act 16:21** "and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." **Act 18:13** saying, "This *fellow* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."
32. *In solidum*: as a whole.
33. **Hab 1:11** Then *his* mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, *Ascribing* this power to his god."
34. Cicero, 57 B.C., "Pietate et religione atque hâc una sapientia, quod deorum immortalium numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnes gentes nationesque superamus." *Orat. de Har. Resp., 19* ["Resp., 9" in Goold's edition]. The translation used here was done by Francis Bacon, *Essays – Civil and Moral*, XVI, Of Atheism.
35. Dionysius (60 B.C.- post 7 A.D.) – Greek historian and teacher of rhetoric during the reign of Caesar Augustus.
36. That is, Augustine of Hippo (354-430); the book is his *City of God*.
37. Mat 5.29-30.
38. **2Cor 10:4** For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, [5] casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,
39. In the next chapter, Owen will show that, while external arguments are good in their place, they are insufficient to establish faith or belief unless we *first* believe that the Scriptures are the word of God. And that belief comes *from God*. God's word reveals not only His nature, mind, and will, but God reveals Himself there, as its author, by His Spirit illumining our minds. – WHG

40. Those who question the truth or validity of something; or take exception to it.

Chapter IV. Moral certainty, as the result of external arguments, is insufficient.

1. *Divine revelation is* the proper object of *divine faith*. With such faith we can believe nothing but what is divinely revealed; [1] and what is divinely revealed can be received by us in no other way. If we do not believe it with divine faith, then we do not believe it at all. Such is the Scripture. It is everywhere proposed to us as the word of God, and we are required to believe it — that is, first to believe that it is the word of God, and then to believe the things contained in it. For this proposition, "The Scripture is the word of God," is a divine revelation, and so it is to be believed. But God nowhere requires, nor ever required, that we believe any divine revelation on such propositional grounds, much less on such grounds and motives alone. They are *consequential* to our believing, left to us to plead with others in behalf of what we profess, and to justify it to the world. But in receiving divine revelations, what God requires our faith in, and our obedience to — whether they are immediately given and declared, or as recorded in the Scripture — is his own authority and veracity: "I am the Lord;" "Thus says the high and lofty One;" "Thus says the Lord;" "To the

law and to the testimony;" "This is my beloved Son, hear him;" "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" "Believe in the Lord and his prophets." [2] This alone is what he requires us to resolve our faith into. So when he gave us the law of our lives in the Ten Commandments, the eternal and unchangeable rule of our obedience to him, he gives no other reason to oblige us to this obedience, except this alone: "I am the Lord your God." The sole formal reason of all our obedience is taken from his own nature and our relation to him; nor does he propose any other reason why we should believe him, or the revelation which he makes of his mind and will.

And our *faith* is part of our obedience, the root and principal part of it; therefore, the reason of both is the same. Neither our Lord Jesus Christ nor his apostles ever made use of such arguments or motives for ingenerating faith in the minds of men; nor have they given directions for the use of any such arguments to this end and purpose. But when accused of "following cunningly-devised fables,"[2Pet 1.16] the apostles appealed to Moses and the prophets, to the revelations they themselves had received, and those that were recorded before. It is true, they worked miracles in confirmation of their own divine mission and of the doctrine which they taught. But all the miracles of our Savior were worked among those who believed the whole Scripture (as then given) to be the word of God; and those miracles of the apostles were done before the writings of the books of the New Testament. Therefore, their doctrine as materially considered, and their warranty to teach it, were sufficiently (indeed, abundantly) confirmed by those miracles. But divine revelation, formally considered and as written, was left upon the old foundation of the authority of God who gave it. No such method is prescribed, no such example is proposed to us in the Scripture, that would

make use of these arguments and motives for the conversion of the souls of men to God, and ingenerating faith in them.

In fact, in some cases, the use of such means is decried as unprofitable; and the sole authority of God is appealed to, putting forth his power in and by his word: 1Cor 2.4, 5, 13; 1Cor 14.36-37; 2Cor 4.7. [3] Yet the use of arguments and motives has been granted and proved as a way of preparation, subservient to receiving the Scripture as the word of God, and for the defense of it against gainsayers and their objections. But from first to last, in the Old and New Testaments, the authority and truth of God are constantly and uniformly proposed as the immediate ground of, and reason of, believing his revelations. Nor can it be proved that he accepts or approves any kind of faith or assent except what is built on that, and resolved into it.

The sum is this: We are obliged by duty to believe the Scriptures are a divine revelation when ministerially or providentially proposed to us (more of this afterward). The ground on which we are to receive them is the authority and veracity of God speaking in them — we believe them *because* they are the word of God. Now, this faith by which we believe them is divine and supernatural, because the formal reason of it is divine and supernatural: namely, God's truth and authority. Therefore, we do not and should not only believe that the Scripture is "highly probable;" nor should we believe it only with a moral persuasion and assurance, built on arguments that are absolutely fallible and human. For if the formal reason of our faith is the veracity and authority of God, then if we do not believe with divine and supernatural faith, we do not believe at all.

2. The *moral certainty* addressed is a mere effect of reason. No more is required for it than that the reasons proposed for the assent required, is what

the mind judges to be convincing and prevalent. What necessarily ensues from this is an inferior kind of knowledge, or a firm opinion, or some kind of persuasion which has not yet gotten an intelligible name. On this supposition, there is therefore no need for any work of the Holy Ghost to enable us to believe or to work faith in us — for no more is required in this than what necessarily arises from a naked exercise of reason.

If it is said that the inquiry is not about what the work of the Spirit of God is in us, but concerns the reasons and motives proposed to us for believing, I grant that. But what we urge in this is that the act which is exerted upon such motives, or the persuasion which is begotten in our minds by them, is purely *natural*; it requires no special work of the Holy Ghost in us to effect it. Now, *this is not faith*; nor can we be said, in the Scriptural sense, to believe by this. And so, in particular, we cannot be said to believe that the Scriptures are the word of God. For faith is "the gift *of God*," and "not of ourselves," Eph 2.8. It is "given to some on behalf of Christ," Phi 1.29, and not to others; Mat 11.25, 13.11. [4]

But assent that is based on external arguments and motives, is *of ourselves*; it is equally common and exposed to all. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1Cor 12.3; but the one who believes the Scripture truly, rightly, and according to his duty, *does* say so. No man comes to Christ unless he has "heard and learned from the Father," Joh 6.45. As this other means is contrary to Scripture, [5] so it is expressly condemned by the ancient church, particularly by the second Arausican council, [6] canon 5:

"If anyone says that not only the increase of faith but also its beginning and the very desire for faith, by which we believe in Him who justifies the ungodly and comes to the regeneration of holy baptism — if anyone says

that this belongs to us by nature and not by a gift of grace, that is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit amending our will and turning it from unbelief to faith and from godlessness to godliness, it is proof that he is opposed to the teaching of the Apostles;" [7]

And plainly, canon 7:

"If anyone affirms that we can form any right opinion or make any right choice which relates to the salvation of eternal life, as is expedient for us, or that we can be saved, that is, assent to the preaching of the gospel through our natural powers without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who makes all men gladly assent to and believe in the truth, he is led astray by a heretical spirit, and does not understand the voice of God;" [8]

It is still granted that the arguments intended are of good use in their place, and for their proper end, which is to produce whatever assent to the truth they are capable of effecting — speaking of all those arguments which are indeed true, and will endure a strict examination. For some are frequently made use of in this cause, which will not endure a trial. Although this assent is not what is required of us in a way of duty, but is inferior to it, the mind is prepared and disposed by them to receive the truth in its proper evidence.

3. Our assent can be of no other nature than the arguments and motives on which it is built, or by which it is worked in us, just as it cannot exceed their *evidence* in *degree*. Now, these arguments are all human and fallible. Exalt them to the greatest esteem possible, and yet, because they are not demonstrations, nor do they necessarily produce a *certain* knowledge in us (for indeed, if they did, there would be no place left for faith or our obedience in this), they will only produce an opinion in us — though in the highest kind of probability, and firm against objections. For we will allow

the utmost assurance that can be claimed upon them. But this is exclusive of all divine faith, as to any article, thing, matter, or object that is to be believed. For instance, say a man professes that he believes Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Demand the reason why he believes it, and he will say, "Because God, who cannot lie, has revealed and declared him to be so."

Proceed still further, and ask him where or how God has revealed and declared this to be so, and he will answer, "In the Scripture, which is His word." Now inquire further of him (which is necessary) *why* he believes this Scripture is the word of God, or why it is an immediate revelation given from Him. For we must come to this, and have something that we may ultimately rest in, excluding all further inquiries in its own nature; [9] or we can have neither certainty nor stability in our faith. On this supposition, his answer must be that he has many cogent arguments that render it highly probable that it is the word of God. They have prevailed with him to judge it is so, and he is fully persuaded from these, having the highest assurance that the matter will bear. And so he firmly believes it is the word of God. Yes, but it will be replied that *all these arguments are human* in their kind or nature; and therefore they are fallible, so that it is possible they may be false — for everything may be fallible that is not immediately from the first essential Verity. Therefore, this assent to the Scriptures as the word of God is human, fallible, and such that we may be deceived in it. Our assent to the things revealed can be of no other kind than what we give to the revelation itself; for it is resolved into this, and it must be reduced to this. These waters will rise no higher than their fountain. And thus we come at length to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God with a faith that is human and fallible, and which at last may deceive us. This is to "receive the word of

God as the word of men, and not as it is in truth, the word of God," contrary to the apostle in 1Thes 2.13. [10] Therefore —

4. If I believe the Scripture is the *word* of God with human faith only, then I do not believe whatever is contained in it in any other way; this overthrows all faith, properly so called. And if I believe whatever is contained in the Scripture with divine and supernatural faith, I cannot help but believe the Scripture itself by the same faith; this removes moral certainty out of our way. And the reason of this is that, we must believe the revelation and the things revealed in it, with the same *kind* of faith, or else we bring confusion on the whole work of believing. No man living can distinguish in his experience between that faith by which he believes the Scripture, and that faith by which he believes its doctrine, or the things contained in it. Nor is there any such distinction or difference intimated in the Scripture itself — but all our believing is absolutely resolved into the authority of God revealing it. Nor can it be rationally apprehended that our assent to the things revealed, is of a kind and nature superior to what we yield to the revelation itself. For however evident and cogent the arguments are which our assent is resolved into — however firm and certain the assent itself can be imagined — it is still human and natural; and thus it is inferior to what is divine and supernatural.

And yet, on this other supposition, [11] what is of a superior kind and nature is wholly resolved into what is inferior, and on all occasions it must resort to this inferior kind for relief and confirmation. For the faith by which we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, is on all occasions absolutely melted down into that faith by which we believe the Scriptures are the word of God.

But none of these things are my present special design; and therefore I have insisted on them long enough. I am not inquiring what grounds men may have on which to build an opinion or any kind of human persuasion, that the Scriptures are the word of God. Nor am I inquiring how we may prove or maintain to gainsayers that they are so. I am asking what is required that we may believe they are so with divine and supernatural faith, and what the work of the Spirit of God is in this.

But it may be further said that,

"These external arguments and motives are not of themselves, and considered separately from the doctrine which they testify to, the sole ground and reason of our believing. For if it were possible that a thousand arguments of similar cogency were offered to confirm any truth or doctrine, if it did not have a divine worth and excellence *in itself*, they could give the mind no assurance of it. Therefore, it is the *truth* itself, or the *doctrine* contained in the Scripture, which they testify to, that animates them and gives them their efficacy. For there is such a majesty, holiness, and excellence in the doctrines of the gospel; and moreover, such a suitableness in them to unprejudiced reason; and such a correspondence to all the rational desires and expectations of the soul — as to evidence that they proceed from the fountain of infinite wisdom and goodness. It must be conceived impossible for such excellent, heavenly mysteries, that have such use and benefit for all mankind, to be the product of any created industry. Let a man but know himself in any measure — his state and condition, with a desire for that blessedness which his nature is capable of, and which he cannot help but design when the Scripture is proposed to him in the ministry of the church, and attested to by the arguments insisted on — and there will appear to him in its truths and doctrines, or in the things that it

contains, such an evidence of the majesty and authority of God, that these will prevail with him to believe it is a divine revelation. This persuasion is such that the mind is established in its assent to the truth, so as to yield obedience to all that is required of us. And because our belief of the Scripture is only to rightly perform our duty, or all that obedience which God expects from us — our minds being guided by its precepts and directions, and duly influenced by its promises and threatenings to this end — there is no other faith required of us except what is sufficient to oblige us to that obedience."

This being, so far as I can apprehend, the substance of what is proposed and adhered to by some learned men, it will be briefly examined. And I say here, as on other occasions, that I would rejoice to see more of such a faith in the world that would effectively oblige men to obedience, out of a conviction of the excellence of the doctrine and the truth of the promises and threatenings of the word — even if learned men were never to agree about the formal reason of faith. Such notions of truth, when most diligently inquired into, are but sacrifice compared with obedience. [12] But the truth itself is also to be inquired after diligently.

This opinion, therefore, either supposes what we will shortly declare — namely, the *necessity* of an internal, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in the *illumination of our minds*, enabling us to believe with divine and supernatural faith — or it does not. If it does, then I suppose, as to its substance, it will be found to coincide with what we will afterward assert and prove to be the *formal reason of* believing. However, I cannot absolutely comply [13] with it as it is usually proposed, for these two reasons, among others:

1. It belongs to the nature of faith, of whatever sort, that it be built on and resolved into *testimony*. This is what distinguishes it from any other conception, knowledge, or assent of our minds, based on other reasons and causes. And if this testimony is divine, so is that faith by which we give assent to it, on the part of the object. But the doctrines contained in the Scripture, or the subject-matter of the truth to be believed, do not have the nature of a testimony in them; rather, they are the material objects, not the formal objects of faith, which must always differ. If it is said that these truths or doctrines so evidence themselves to be from God, that in and by them we have the witness and authority of God himself proposed to us to resolve our faith into, I will not further contend about it. I will only say that the authority of God, and thus his veracity, manifest themselves primarily in the revelation itself, before they do so in the things revealed; which is what we plead for.

2. The *excellency of the doctrine*, or things revealed in the Scriptures, does not so much respect the truth of them speculatively, as it respects their goodness and suitableness for the souls of men as to their present condition and eternal end. [14] Now, things under that consideration do not respect *faith* so much as *spiritual sense* and experience. Nor can any man duly apprehend such a goodness suitable to our constitution and condition, with absolute usefulness in the truth of the Scriptures, unless we suppose there is an antecedent assent of the mind to them, which is *believing.* This assent, therefore, cannot be the *reason* why we believe.

But if this opinion does not proceed on the aforesaid supposition (shortly to be proved), and if it requires no more for our satisfaction in the truth of the Scriptures, and our assent based on that, than the due exercise of reason (the natural faculties of our minds) about them when proposed to us, then I

suppose it is furthest from the truth, for these ensuing reasons (among many others):

1. On this supposition, the whole *work of believing* would be a *work of reason*. "Let it be so," say some; "nor is it fit to be conceived otherwise." But if it is so, then its object must be things that are so evident in themselves and in their own nature, that the mind is, as it were, compelled by that evidence to assent, for it cannot do otherwise. If there is such a light and evidence in the things themselves with respect to our reason, in the right use and exercise of it, then the mind is thereby necessitated to assent to it. This both overthrows the nature of faith — substituting in its place an assent based on natural evidence— and it absolutely excludes the necessity or use of any work of the Holy Ghost in our believing, which sober Christians will scarcely comply with.

2. There are *some doctrines* revealed in the Scripture (and those of the most importance), which concern and contain things so far *above our reason* that, without some previous supernatural disposition of mind, they carry no evidence of truth to our mere reason, nor of suitableness to our constitution and end. For such an apprehension requires both the spiritual elevation of the mind by supernatural illumination, and a divine assent to the authority of the revelation on that, before reason can so much as be satisfied in the truth and excellence of such doctrines. Such are those concerning the holy Trinity, or the subsistence of one singular essence in three distinct persons, the incarnation of the Son of God, the resurrection of the dead, and various other doctrines that are the most proper subjects of divine revelation. There is a heavenly glory in some of these things, which natural reason can never thoroughly apprehend because it is finite and limited. Thus it can neither receive them nor delight in them as doctrinally

proposed to us, even with all the aids and assistance mentioned before. Flesh and blood does not reveal these things to our minds, but our Father which is in heaven;[Mat 16.17] nor does any man know these mysteries of the kingdom of God, except the one "to whom it is given;" [Mat 19.11] nor do any learn these things rightly except those who are taught by God.[Joh 6.45]

3. Take our reason singly, without the consideration of divine *grace* and *illumination*, and it is not only weak and limited, but depraved and corrupted; and the carnal mind cannot subject itself to the authority of God in any supernatural revelation whatsoever.

Therefore the truth is, that the pure and absolute doctrines of the gospel are so far from having any convincing evidence in themselves of their divine truth, excellence, and goodness, to the reason of men who are unrenewed by the Holy Ghost, that they are "foolishness" [15] and most undesirable to their reason, as I have proved at large elsewhere. We will therefore proceed.

There are two things to be considered with respect to our believing that the Scriptures are the word of God in a due manner, or according to our duty. The first respects the *subject*, or the *mind of man* — how it is enabled to this belief. The other is the *object* to be believed, with the true reason why we believe the Scripture with divine and supernatural faith.

The first of these must of necessity fall under our consideration in this; for without it, whatever reasons, evidences, or motives are proposed to us, we will never believe in a due manner. Because the mind of man, or the minds of all men, are *by nature depraved, corrupt, carnal, and enmity against God*, they cannot of themselves, or by virtue of any innate ability of their own, understand or assent to spiritual things in a spiritual manner; we sufficiently proved and confirmed this before. [16]

For this reason, that assent which is worked in us by mere external arguments, consisting in the rational conclusion and judgment which we make upon their truth and evidence, is not that faith with which we ought to believe the word of God. Therefore, so that we may believe the Scriptures are the word of God, according to our duty as required of us by God — in a useful, profitable, and saving manner, above and beyond that *natural, human faith* and assent which is the effect of the arguments and motives of credibility insisted on before, with all others of that kind — *there is and must be worked in us, by the power of the Holy Ghost, supernatural and divine faith, by which we are enabled to do so, or rather by which we do so*. This work of the Spirit of God is distinct from, and in order of nature it is antecedent to, all *divine objective evidence* of the Scriptures being the word of God, or the formal reason that moves us to believe it. Therefore, without this work of the Spirit, whatever arguments or motives are proposed to us, we cannot believe that the Scriptures are the word of God in a due manner, and as a duty that is required of us.

Some, it may be, will suppose that these things are "out of place," and impertinent to our present purpose. For while we are inquiring on what *grounds* we believe that the Scripture is the word of God, we seem to *flee to the work of the Holy Ghost* in our own minds, which is irrational. But we must not be ashamed of the gospel, nor of its truth, because some do not understand or will not duly consider what is proposed.

It is necessary that we return to the work of the Holy Spirit, not with particular respect to the Scriptures that are to be believed, but with respect to our own minds, and that faith with which they are to be believed. For it is not the *reason* why we believe the Scriptures, but the *power* by which we are enabled to do so, which we are inquiring about at present:

1. The *faith* by which we believe the Scripture is the word of God, is *worked in us by the Holy Ghost*; this can be denied only on two principles or suppositions:

(1.) That it is not *divine and supernatural faith* by which we believe it is the word of God, but only other moral assurance of it.

(2.) That this *divine and supernatural faith* is of ourselves, and it is not worked in us by the Holy Ghost.

The first of these has already been disproved, and it will be further evicted afterward; it may be there are very few who are of that judgment. For generally, whatever men suppose is the prime object, principal motive, and formal reason of that faith, they all acknowledge that it is divine and supernatural. And as to the second, it is must be of the operation of the Spirit of God. For to say it is *divine and supernatural* is to say that it is *not of ourselves*, but it is the grace and gift of the Spirit of God, worked in us by his divine and supernatural power. Those of the church of Rome who would resolve our faith in this matter into the authority of their church *objectively*, still acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit ingenerating faith in us *subjectively*; and that work is necessary to our believing the Scripture in a due manner. [17] We do not, therefore, assert any such divine formal reason of believing, such that the mind would not need supernatural assistance enabling it to assent to this. No indeed: we affirm that without this assistance, there is no true faith at all in any man — however forcible and pregnant with evidence those arguments and motives can be imagined on which he believes. It is in this case, as it is in natural things — neither the light of the sun, nor any persuasive arguments made to men to look at it, will enable them to discern it, unless they are endowed with a due visual faculty.

And the Scripture is express in this beyond all possibility of contradiction. Nor is it, that I know of, denied as yet by anyone, in express terms. For indeed, it cannot be questioned by anyone who owns the gospel, that all which is *properly called faith* with respect to divine revelation, and is accepted by God as such, is the work of the Spirit of God in us, or it is bestowed on us by him.

I also proved it elsewhere so fully and largely, that at present I will give no other confirmation than what necessarily falls in with the description of the nature of that faith by which we believe, and the way or manner of its being worked in us.

2. The work of the Holy Ghost for this purpose, consists in the *saving illumination* of the mind. And the effect of it is a *supernatural light* by which the mind is renewed: see Rom 12.2; Eph 1.18-19, 3.16-19. [18] It is called a "heart to understand, eyes to see, ears to hear," Deu 29.4; the "opening the eyes of our understanding," Eph 1.18; "giving us an understanding,"'1Joh 5.20. Hereby we are enabled to discern the evidences of the divine origin and authority of the Scripture that are in it, as well as assent to the truth contained in it. Without it, we cannot do so, for "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1Cor 2.14. To this end, it is written in the prophets that "we will all be taught by God," Joh 6.45. That there is a divine and heavenly excellence in the Scripture cannot be denied by anyone who admits its divine origin on any grounds or motives whatsoever. For all the works of God set forth his praise; and it is impossible for anything to proceed immediately from Him without express characteristics of divine excellencies on it. And as to the communication of these characteristics of

himself, he has "magnified his word above all his name." Psa 138.2 But we cannot discern these, however illustrious they are themselves, without the effectual communication to our minds of the light mentioned — that is, without divine, supernatural illumination.

In this, "he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2Cor 4.6. He irradiates the mind with a spiritual light, by which it is enabled to discern the glory of spiritual things. Unbelievers cannot do this: "the god of this world has blinded the eyes of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them," 2Cor 4.4. Those who are under the power of their natural darkness and blindness, cannot see or discern that divine excellence in the Scripture — especially where prejudices are also superadded (as there are in the whole world of unbelievers), begotten and increased by the craft of Satan. And without an apprehension of it, no man can rightly believe it is the word of God. Such persons may assent to the truth of the Scripture and its divine origin, on external arguments and rational motives; but they cannot believe it with divine and supernatural faith on those arguments and motives alone.

There are two things which hinder or disenable men from believing with divine and supernatural faith, when any divine revelation is objectively proposed to them:

First, the *natural blindness and darkness of their minds*, which have come upon all by the fall, and also by the depravation of their nature that ensued from that.

Secondly, the *prejudices* that — through the craft of Satan, the god of this world — their minds are possessed with by *traditions, education, and*

experience in the world.

This last obstruction or hindrance may be so far removed by external arguments and credible motives, that men may attain from them a moral persuasion concerning the divine origin of the Scripture. But these arguments cannot remove or take away the native blindness of the mind. That is only removed by the renovation and divine illumination of the mind. Therefore, none will, I think, positively affirm that we can believe that the Scripture is the word of God, in the way and manner which God requires, without a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit on our minds, in their illumination. So David prays that God would "open his eyes, that he might behold wondrous things out of the law," Psa 119.18; that he would "make him understand the way of his precepts," verse 27; that he would "give him understanding, and he would keep the law," verse 34. So the Lord Christ also "opened the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures," Luk 24.45 — as he affirmed before: that it was given to some and not to others, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, Mat 11.25, 13.11. These things are not spoken in vain, nor is the grace intended in them needless.

The Scripture calls the communication of this light to us, *revealing and revelation*: Mat 11.25, "You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes;" that is, it is given to them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven when these mysteries were preached to them. And "no man knows the Father, but the one to whom the Son will reveal him," verse 27. So the apostle prays for the Ephesians, "that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know," etc., Eph 1.17-19. It is true that these

Ephesians were already believers, or considered as such by the apostle. But if he judged it necessary to pray for them, that they might have "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of their understanding," and this was with respect to further degrees of faith and knowledge — or as he says in another place, that they might come to "the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God," Col 2.2 — then enlightenment is much more necessary to make believers of those who were not believers before, but were utter strangers to the faith.

But because a pretense of this has been abused (as we will see afterward), so pleading it is liable to be mistaken. For some are ready to think this retreat to a *Spirit of revelation is* only a pretense to discard all rational arguments, and to introduce *enthusiasm* in their place. Now, the charge is grievous; yet, because it is groundless, we must not forego what the Scripture plainly affirms and instructs us in — thereby to avoid the charge, Scripture testimonies may be expounded according to the analogy of faith. [19] But they must not be denied or despised, however contrary they seem to our apprehension of things. Some, I confess, seem to disregard both the *objective* work of the Holy Spirit in this matter (which we will treat afterward), and also his *subjective* work in our minds, so that all things may be reduced to sense and reason. But we must grant that, to open the eyes of our understanding, a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" Eph 1.17 is needed to enable us to duly believe that the Scripture is the word of God, and it goes before the gospel. Thus it is our duty to pray continually for that Spirit, if we intend to be established in the faith of that gospel.

Yet we do not plead for *external immediate revelations* which were granted to the prophets, apostles, and other penmen of the Scripture. The

revelation we intend differs from them, both in its special subject and its *formal reason* or nature — that is, in its whole kind. For,

1. The subject-matter of divine, *prophetic revelation* by an "*immediate divine inspiration*," 2Tim 3.16 concerned things not made known before — things "hid in God," or in the counsels of his will, and were "revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit," Eph 3.5, 9, 10. Whether they were doctrines or things, they were, at least as to their present circumstances, made known by their revelation, from the counsels of God. But the matter and subject of the revelation we address is nothing but what is already revealed. It is an internal revelation of that which is outward and antecedent to it; it is not to be extended beyond the bounds of this. And if any pretend to *immediate revelations* of things not revealed before, we have no concern in their pretenses.

2. They differ likewise in their nature or kind: for *immediate, divine, prophetic revelation*, consisted in an immediate inspiration or afflatus, [20] or in visions and voices from heaven. It was accompanied with a power of the Holy Ghost *transiently* affecting their minds and guiding their tongues and hands, to whom these were granted, and by which they received and represented divine impressions — just as an instrument of music receives and represents the skill of the hand by which it is moved. I have more fully discussed the nature of this revelation elsewhere. [21]

But this *revelation of the Spirit* consists in his effectual operation, freeing our minds from darkness, ignorance, and prejudice, enabling them to discern spiritual things in a due manner. And such a *Spirit of revelation* is necessary for those who would rightly believe the Scripture, or anything else that is divine and supernatural contained in it. And if through the power of temptations and prejudices, men are in the dark, or at a loss as to the

great and fundamental principle of all religion — namely, the divine origin and authority of the Scripture — they will absolutely lean on their own understandings.[Pro 3.5] They will have the whole difference determined by the natural powers and faculties of their own souls. If they do so without seeking *divine aid and assistance*, or earnest prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to open the eyes of their understandings, they must be content to abide in their uncertainties, or to come away from them without any advantage to their souls. It is not that I would deny or take away from men, the use of their reason in this matter. For why is their reason given to them, unless it is to use it in those things which are of the greatest importance to them? Only, I must crave leave to say that it is not sufficient of itself to enable us to perform this duty, without the immediate aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God.

If anyone, on these principles, were now to ask us *why we believe the Scripture is the word of God*; we would not answer, "It is *because the Holy Ghost has enlightened our minds, worked faith in us, and enabled us to believe it*." Without this, we say — indeed, if the Spirit of God did not so work in us and upon us — we neither should nor could believe with divine and supernatural faith. If God had not opened the heart of Lydia,[Act 16.14] she would not have attended to the things preached by Paul, so as to receive them. And without it, the light often shines in the darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not.[Joh 1.5] But this neither is nor can it be the formal *object of our faith*, or the reason why we believe the Scripture is of God, or why we believe anything else.

By this enlightenment, we neither do, nor can we, rationally answer the question *why we believe*. The reason must be something external and evidentially proposed to us. For whatever ability to spiritually assent exists

in the understanding, which is thus worked in it by the Holy Ghost, the understanding cannot assent to anything, with any kind of assent — whether natural or supernatural — except what is outwardly proposed to it as true; and with sufficient *evidence* that it is true. Therefore, whatever proposes anything to us as true, with evidence of that truth, *that* is the formal object of our faith, or the reason why we believe. And what is so proposed, must be evidenced to be true, or else we cannot believe it.

Our faith is according to the nature of that evidence — human if that evidence is human, and divine if that evidence is divine. Now, nothing of this is done by that saving light which is infused into our minds. And it is therefore not the reason why we believe what we believe.

Some seem to conceive that the only *general ground* for *believing that the Scripture is* the word of God, consists in *rational arguments and motives of credibility.* Therefore, while they grant that private persons may have their assurance of this from the illumination of the Holy Ghost (though this means is not pleadable for others), they grant what is not desired by any that I know of, and what in itself is not true. For this work consists solely in enabling the mind for that kind of assent which is divine and supernatural faith, on the supposition that an external formal reason of it has been duly proposed. Yet, it is not the reason why any believe; nor is it the ground into which their faith is resolved. [22]

It remains only that we inquire whether our faith in this matter is not resolved into an *immediate internal testimony of the Holy Ghost*, assuring us of the divine origin and authority of the Scripture, distinct from the work of *spiritual illumination*, described before. For it is the common opinion of protestant divines that the *testimony of the Holy Ghost* is the ground on which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God, and it will be

immediately declared in what sense it is so. But on this, they are generally charged by those of the church of Rome (and others), with resolving the entire ground and assurance of faith into their own particular spirits, or the spirit of every one that pretends to it. And this is looked at as a sufficient warranty to reproach them for countenancing emotionalism, and exposing the minds of men to endless delusions. Therefore, this matter must be inquired into a little further. [For it is assumed that], —

"An *internal testimony of the Spirit* may intend *an extraordinary afflatus* or new immediate revelation. Men may suppose they have, or ought to have, an internal particular testimony that the Scripture is the word of God, by which (and by which alone) they may be infallibly assured that it is so. And this is supposed to be of the same nature as the revelation made to the prophets and penmen of the Scripture. For it is neither an *external proposition* of truth, nor an *internal ability to assent* to such a proposition — and besides these, there is no divine operation of this kind, except an immediate *prophetic inspiration* or revelation. Therefore, because such a revelation or immediate testimony of the Spirit is the only reason why we believe, it is that alone which our faith rests on and is resolved into."

This is what is commonly imputed to those who deny that either the *authority of the church*, or any other *external arguments or motives of credibility*, are the *formal reason of* our faith. However, not one of them, that I know of, ever asserted any such thing [as stated above]. And I therefore deny that our faith is resolved into any such *private testimony*, immediate revelation, or inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And that is for the ensuing reasons:

1. Since the finishing of the canon of Scripture, the church is not under that *conduct* which needs such new extraordinary revelations.[23] Indeed, it

lives upon the internal gracious operations of the Spirit, enabling us to understand, believe, and obey the perfect and complete revelation of the will of God that has already been made; thus the church has neither need nor use for new revelations. To suppose there is a need for them, not only overthrows the perfection of the Scripture, but it also leaves us uncertain whether we know all that is to be believed for salvation, or our whole duty, or when we may have it. For it would be our duty to live all our days in expectation of new revelations, which is inconsistent with peace, assurance, and consolation.

2. On this supposition, those who are to believe, would not be able to secure themselves from *delusion*, and being imposed on by the deceits of Satan — for this new revelation is either to be tested by the Scripture, or it is not. If it is to be tried and examined by the Scripture, then such new revelation acknowledges a superior rule, judgment, and testimony; and so it cannot be that which our faith is ultimately resolved into. If it is exempted from that rule of testing the spirits, then —

(1.) It must produce the *grant of this exemption*, seeing that the rule is extended generally to all things and doctrines that relate to *faith* or obedience.

(2.) It must declare what the grounds and evidences of its "self-credibility" are, and how it may be infallibly or assuredly distinguished from all delusions — which can never be done.

And if any tolerable countenance could be given to these things, we will show immediately that no such private testimony, though real, can be the formal object of faith or reason of believing.

3. It has so fallen out in the *providence of God*, that all generally who, in any things concerning faith or obedience, have given themselves up to the

pretended conduct of immediate revelations, — even though they have pleaded respect to the Scripture also — have been seduced into opinions and practices that are directly repugnant to it. And this, with all persons of sobriety, is sufficient to discard this pretense.

But this *internal testimony of the Spirit* is explained by others in quite another way. For they say that besides the work of the Holy Ghost insisted on before — by which he takes away our *natural blindness*, and (enlightening our minds) enables us to discern the divine excellencies that are in the Scripture — there is another internal efficiency of his, by which we are moved, persuaded, and enabled to believe. They say we are so taught of God by this, that — finding the glory and majesty of God in the word — our hearts, by an ineffable power, assent to the truth without any hesitation. And this work of the Spirit carries its own evidence in itself, producing such an assurance above all human judgment, that it needs no further arguments or testimonies. This is what faith rests on and is resolved into.

Some learned men seem to embrace this, because they suppose that the *objective evidence* which is given in the Scripture itself is only moral, or it can give only a moral assurance. Therefore, because faith ought to be divine and supernatural, what faith is resolved into must also be divine and supernatural — indeed, it is divine and supernatural from the *formal reason of* it alone. And they can apprehend nothing in this work that is immediately divine, except this *internal testimony of the Spirit*, in which God himself speaks to our hearts.

Yet, as it is thus explained, we cannot allow it to be the formal object of faith, nor that in which faith acquiesces; for —

1. It does not have the proper *nature of a divine testimony*. It may be a divine *work*, but it is not a divine *testimony*; rather, the nature of faith is

built on an *external* testimony. Therefore, though our minds may be established and enabled to believe firmly and steadfastly by an ineffable internal work of the Holy Ghost (of which we may also have a certain experience), yet neither that work, nor its effect, can be the *reason* why we believe, nor that by which we are *moved* to believe. It is only that *by which* we believe. [24]

2. The *formal object of our faith*, or the reason on which we believe, is the same *and common to all who believe*. For our inquiry is not how or by what means this or that man *came to believe*, but why anyone or everyone to whom the scripture is proposed, *ought to believe*. The object that is to be believed, and which is proposed to all, is the same. And the faith required of all by way of duty, is the same (or it is of the same kind and nature). And therefore, the *reason* why we believe must also be the same. But on this other supposition, there would have to be as many distinct reasons for believing, as there are believers.

3. On this supposition, it cannot be the duty of anyone to believe that the Scripture is the word of God, if they have not received this *internal testimony of the Spirit*. For where the true formal reason of believing is not proposed to us, it is not our duty to believe. Therefore, although the Scripture is proposed as the word of God, it is not our duty to believe it is the word of God, until we have this work of the Spirit in our hearts (*if* that were the formal reason of our believing). But not to press any further how it is possible for men to be deceived and deluded in their apprehensions of such an internal testimony of the Spirit, this cannot be admitted as the formal object of our faith, because it would divert us from what is public, proper, and in every way certain and infallible. [25] This is especially true if this testimony is not to be tried by the Scripture — if it is, then it loses its

"self-credibility;" and if it is not, then it throws us into circular reasoning, which is what the Papists charge us with.

However, that work of the Spirit which may be called an *internal real testimony*, is granted as that which belongs to the stability and assurance of faith. For if he did not work in us, or upon us, other than by the communication of spiritual light to our minds, enabling us to discern the evidences that are in the Scripture of its own divine origin, we would often be shaken in our assent and moved from our stability. For our spiritual darkness is removed only *in part*; while we are here, we see things at best but darkly, as in a mirror;[1Cor 13.12] all things that are believed, have tenuous evidence or some obscurity attending them. And because temptations frequently shake and disturb the due respect of the faculty toward the object, or interpose mists and clouds between them, we can have no assurance in believing, unless our minds are further established by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, he assists us in two ways to believe, and to make our minds certain about the things believed, so that we may hold fast the beginning of our confidence, firm and steadfast to the end.[Heb 3.6] For —

1. He gives to believers a *spiritual sense* of the power and *reality of the things believed*, by which their faith is greatly established. And although the divine witness, to which our faith is ultimately resolved, does not consist in this, it is the greatest corroborating testimony of which we are capable. This is what brings us to the "riches of the full assurance of understanding," Col 2.2; also 1Thes 1.5. On account of this spiritual experience, our perception of spiritual things is so often expressed by acts of sense, such as tasting, seeing, feeling, and similar means of assurance in natural things. And when believers have attained this, they find the divine wisdom, goodness, and authority of God so present to them, that they need neither argument, nor

motive, nor anything else, to persuade or confirm them in believing. Because this spiritual experience, which believers obtain through the Holy Ghost, cannot be rationally contended. It is such that those who have received it, cannot fully express it; and those who have not received it, cannot understand it, nor the efficacy which it has to secure and establish the mind. And so it is left to be determined by those alone who have their "senses exercised to discern good and evil." Heb 5.14 This belongs to the internal subjective testimony of the Holy Ghost.

2. He so assists, helps, and relieves us, against *temptations to the contrary*, that they will not be prevalent. Our first *prime assent* to the divine authority of the Scripture, based upon its proper grounds and reasons, will not secure us against future objections and temptations to the contrary, from all manner of causes and occasions. David's faith was so assaulted by them that "he said in his haste that all men were liars;" Psa 116.11 and Abraham himself, after he had received the promise that "in his seed all nations would be blessed," was reduced to that anxious inquiry, "Lord God, what will you give me, seeing that I go childless?" Gen 15.2; and Peter was so winnowed by Satan, that although his faith did not fail, he greatly failed and fainted in its exercise. And we all know what fears from within, what fights from without, we are exposed to in this matter. Of this sort are all those atheistic objections against the Scripture which abound these days, which the devil uses as fiery darts to inflame the souls of men and to destroy their faith. Indeed, this is that work which the powers of hell are principally engaged in at this day. Having lopped off many branches, they now lay their axe to the root of faith. And hence, in the midst of the profession of Christian religion, there is no greater controversy than whether the Scriptures are the word of God or not. Against all these temptations the

Holy Ghost gives such a continual supply of spiritual strength and assistance to believers, that these temptations will at no time prevail, nor will their faith totally fail. In such cases, the Lord Christ intercedes for us so that our faith *will not* fail;[Luk 22.32] and God's grace is sufficient against the buffetings of these temptations.[2Cor 12.9] In this, the fruit of Christ's intercession, with the grace of God and its efficiency, are communicated to us by the Holy Ghost. This is no place to declare in particular what those internal aids are, by which he establishes and assures our minds against the force and prevalence of objections and temptations against the divine authority of the Scripture — how they are communicated to us and received by us. It is in vain for anyone who denies these things, to pretend to the name of Christian. And these supplies also have the nature of an internal, real testimony, by which faith is established.

It is somewhat strange that, after a long, quiet possession of the professed faith, and the assent of most men to this, there should now arise among us such an open opposition to *the divine authority of the Scriptures* (as we find by experience). And thus it may not be amiss in our passage, to name the principal causes or occasions of this opposition. For if we were to bring into one reckoning (as we justly may), all those who either openly oppose and reject it — or who use or neglect it at their pleasure; or who set up other guides in competition with it or above it; or who otherwise declare that they have no sense of the immediate authority of God in this — we will find that they are like the Moors, or like slaves in some countries or plantations:

They are so great in number and force above their rulers and other inhabitants, that it is only lack of communication and confidence, and some distinct interests, that keep them from throwing off their yoke and restraint. I will name only three causes of this surprising and perilous event:

1. A long-continued *outward profession* of the truth of the Scripture, without an *inward experience of its power*. This betrays men at length to question the truth itself, or at least not to regard it as divine. Owning that the Scripture is the word of God, speaks of a divine majesty, authority, and power, that is present in it and with it. This is why men who have professed this for a long time, find that they never had any real *experience* of such a divine presence in it by any effects on their own minds. They grow imperceptibly heedless of it, or they give it a very common place in their thoughts. When they have worn off the impressions that were on their minds from tradition, education, and custom, they then oppose it, rather than believe it in any way. Once a reverence for the word of God on account of its *authority* is lost, an assent to it on account of its *truth* will not long abide. All such persons, under a concurrence of temptations and outward occasions, will either reject it, or prefer other guides before it.

2. The *power of lust*, rising up to a resolve to live in those sins to which the Scripture unavoidably annexes eternal ruin, has prevailed with many to cast off Scripture's authority. For while they are resolved to live in outrageous sin, to admit that there is a divine truth and power in the Scripture, is to cast themselves under a present torment, as well as to make certain their future misery. For there can be no other condition for one who is perpetually aware that God always condemns him in all that he does, and will assuredly take vengeance on him. This is the constant language of the Scripture concerning such persons. Therefore, even if they do not immediately fall into open atheistic opposition to Scripture, as that which may not be consistent with their interest and reputation in the world, they keep it at the greatest distance from their thoughts and minds, until they have habituated themselves to a contempt for it. For they look at it as the

devils looked at Jesus Christ — as that which "comes to torment them before the time." Mat 8.29 Therefore, finding it utterly impossible to pretend there can be a reconciliation between owning that the Scripture is the word of God, and resolving to live in an excess of known sin, multitudes allow their minds to be bribed by their corrupt affections, to relinquish any regard for the word of God.

3. The scandalous quarrels and disputations of those of the church of Rome, against the Scripture and its authority, have contributed much to the ruin of the faith of many. Their great design is to secure, by all means, the power, authority, and infallibility of their church. They continually say about these, as the apostle said in the case of the mariners, "Unless these stay in the ship, we cannot be saved." Without an acknowledgment of these things, they would have it that men can neither believe at present, nor be saved hereafter. To secure this interest, the authority of the Scripture must by all means be questioned and impaired. They will allow it a divine authority in itself, but with respect to us, it has no authority except what it obtains by the suffrage and testimony of their church. But though authority consists essentially in the relation and respect which it has to others, [26] or those who are to be subject to it, to say that it has an authority in itself, but none towards us, is not only to deny that it has any authority at all, but also to reproach it with an empty name.

They deal with it as the soldiers did with Christ: they put a crown on his head, and clothed him with a purple robe, and bowing the knee before him, mocked him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" They ascribe to God's word the crown and robe of divine authority in itself, but not towards any particular person in the world. So, only if they please, will God be God and his word be of some credit among men. In this, they continually seek to

entangle those of the weaker sort by urging them vehemently with this question, "How do you know that the Scripture is the word of God?" And they have in continual readiness a number of sophistical artifices to weaken all evidences that will be pleaded in its behalf. Nor is that all; but on all occasions, they insinuate objections against it — from its obscurity, imperfection, lack of order, difficulties, and seeming contradictions in it — that are suited to take men's minds away from a firm assent to or reliance on it. It is as if a company of men were to conspire to weaken the reputation of a chaste and sober matron, by crafty multiplied insinuations, divulged on all advantages. Even if they cannot deprive her of her virtue (unless the world were for the most part wiser than it appears to be), they will insensitively take away her due esteem. And this in any case, is just as bold an attempt as can well be made. For the first tendency of these courses is to make men atheists; and after success, it is left uncertain whether they will be Papists or not. Therefore, there can be no greater nor more *dishonorable* reflection made on the Christian religion than this: that it has no other evidence or testimony of its truth, than the authority and witness of those by whom it is professed at present, and who have notable worldly advantages by it. Thus the minds of multitudes are secretly influenced by the poison of these disputes, to think that it is in no way necessary to believe that the Scripture is the word of God; or at least, they are shaken from the grounds on which they professed that it is.

A similar disservice is done to faith and to the souls of men, by those who advance "a light within," or an immediate inspiration, into competition with or in place of faith. For as such imaginations take place and prevail in the minds of men, so their respect for the Scripture and all sense of its divine authority decay, as experience openly manifests.

It is, I say, from an unusual concurrence of these and similar causes and occasions, that at present among us there is such a decay in, relinquishment of, and opposition to belief in the Scripture, as perhaps former ages could not parallel.

But the minds of true believers are secured against all these objections and temptations, by supplies of spiritual light, wisdom, and grace from the Holy Ghost.

There are several other special gracious actings of the Holy Spirit on the minds of believers, which also belong to this internal real testimony by which their faith is established. Such are his "anointing" and "sealing" of them, his "witnessing with them," and his being an "earnest" in them; all of which must be spoken to elsewhere. Hereby our faith is every day more and more increased and established. Therefore, no internal work of the Spirit can be the formal reason of our faith, or what it is resolved into. And yet, it is such that, without it, we can never sincerely believe as we should, nor be established in believing, against temptations and objections.

And it is with respect to this work of the Holy Ghost, that divines at the first reformation generally resolved our faith in the divine authority of the Scripture, into the testimony of the Holy Spirit. But they did not do this exclusively by the proper use of external arguments and motives of credibility — whose store indeed is great, and whose fountain is inexhaustible. For these arise from all the indubitable notions that we have of God or ourselves, in reference to our present duty or future happiness. Much less did they exclude that evidence of this, which the Holy Ghost gives to it in and by itself. Their judgment is well expressed in the excellent words of one of them [*Calvin*]. —

Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore, illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God. But above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! ...Nor do we do this as those miserable men who habitually bind over their minds to the thralldom of superstition; but we feel that the undoubted power of his divine majesty lives and breathes there. By this power we are drawn and inflamed, knowingly and willingly, to obey him, yet also more vitally and more effectively than by mere human willing or knowing! ...Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such is a knowledge with which the best reason agrees — in which the mind truly reposes more securely and constantly than in any reasons; finally, such is a feeling that can be born only of heavenly revelation. I speak of nothing other than what each believer experiences within himself — though my words fall far beneath a just explanation of the matter. [27]

And we may briefly recall here what we have attained or passed through: for —

1. We have shown, in general, both what the nature of divine revelation and divine illumination is, with their mutual respect to one another;

2. What the principal external arguments or motives are for credibility, by which the Scripture may be proved to be of a divine origin;

3. What kind of persuasion the effect of them has, or what the assent is which we give to the truth of the Scriptures on their account;

4. What objective evidence there is for reason in the doctrine of the Scriptures, to induce the mind to assent to them;

5. What the nature of that faith is, by which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God, and how it is worked in us by the Holy Ghost;

6. What that internal testimony is, which is given to the divine authority of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, and what the force and use of it is.

The principal part of our work yet remains.

1. Obviously we can believe things that are not divinely revealed; but they are natural things, naturally believed. Owen is only saying that the natural man cannot receive the things of God (1Cor 2.14) – it requires divine faith, Spirit-imparted (1Cor 2.10).
2. Exo 6.2; Isa 57.15; Exo 7.17; Isa 8.20; Mat 17.5; 2Tim 3.16; 2Chr 20.20.
3. **1Cor 2:4** And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. **1Cor 2:13** These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. **1Cor 14:36** Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached? [37] If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. **2Cor 4:7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.
4. **Mat 11:25** At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. **Mat 13:11** He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.
5. Meaning external arguments and human reason.
6. That is, the Second Council of Orange, 529 A.D.
7. "Si quis sicut augmentum ita etiam initium fidei, ipsumque credulitatis affectum, non per gratiæ donum, id est, per inspirationem Spiritus Sancti, corrigentem voluntatem nostram ab infidelitate ad fidem, ab impietate ad

pietatem, sed naturaliter nobis inesse dicit, apostolicis dogmatibus adversarius approbatur."

8. "Si quis per naturæ vigorem bonum aliquod quod ad salutem pertinet vitæ eternæ, cogitate ut expedit, aut eligere, sive salutari, id est, evangelicæ prædicationi consentire posse affirmat absque illuminatione et inspiratione Spiritus Sancti, qui dat omnibus suavitatem consentiendo et credendo veritati, hæretico fallitur spiritu."

9. That is, in the Bible itself. It is not the word of God merely because it says so, but because God reveals it is so. And that revelation is not in the text of Scripture itself ("in its own nature"), but it is an enabling act of the Holy Spirit *in the believer*. – WHG

10. **1Thes 2:13** For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

11. That is, that our belief in the authenticity of God's word can be sufficiently established by rational arguments.

12. The one does not substitute for the other; *both* are required. – WHG

13. *Comply*: to go along with or follow; to embrace.

14. These aren't theoretical truths, but ones that determine our eternal destiny.

15. 1Cor 1.23; 2.14.

16. See Book III, chap. III (in Part 1).

17. "Externæ omnes et humanæ persuasiones non sunt satis ad credendum, quantumcunque ab hominibus competenter ea quæ sunt fidei proponantur. Sed necessaria est insuper causa interior, hoc est divinum quoddam lumen incitans ad credendum, et oculi quidam interai Dei beneficio ad videndum

dati," says Canus, *Loc. Theol., lib. ii. cap. 8*; nor do any of the divines of that church dissent in this.

18. **Rom 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. **Eph 1:17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, [18] the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, [19] and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power; **Eph 3:16** that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, [17] that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height-- [19] to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

19. *Analogy of faith*: a principle of interpretation in which Scripture interprets Scripture. In the *Westminster Confession* (1.9) it is defined this way, "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." In other words, Scripture cannot contradict Scripture.

20. *Afflatus*: A strong creative impulse; divine inspiration.

21. See Part I, Books I and II, espec. Book II, chap. I, p. 145.

22. The sum of Owen's argument is that saving faith must be divine and supernatural. Natural faith, or belief, requires something to believe (the what), and also evidence of its truth (the why, or reasoning) — it is entirely of us, in our own capacity. But to be divine, the *object* of our faith must be divine: it is of God. Thus Christ is the object; God's word is the evidence; and both are divine. And to be supernatural, the *means* of our faith must be supernatural: our belief is God-given and Spirit-enabled (it is revealed to us) — for it is foolishness to the natural mind. And yet, being enabled by the Spirit to believe what is divine, without also having the evidence of it, is insufficient. If it is not grounded in God's word, then it is the mere product of our imagination. *All* these elements of faith must be present, and work in concert, if it is to be *saving* faith. What Owen has not addressed here, is that salvation is by *God's grace alone*; and His grace is effectual even for those who lack the mental capacity to meet this manifold standard of belief. He addresses such saving grace in Book IX, chap. II., especially . – WHG

23. How the church is to conduct itself in the world is sufficiently clear in Scripture; it is unequivocal and unchanging.

24. In other words, it may be the *means* of our belief, but it is not the *cause* or reason of it.

25. Namely, the word of God itself, as preached (Rom 10.14).

26. ἐκ τῶν πρός τι (*ek ton pros ti*), "derives the relative" (or is taken from the relationship); Aristotle's *Logic*, Chap. VI. par. 3.

27. Taken from Battles translation of Calvin's *Institutes*. "Maneat ergo," he says, "hoc fixum, quos Spiritus sanctus intus docuit, solidè acquiescere in Scriptura, et hanc quidem esse αὐτόπιστον, neque demonstrationi et rationibus subjici eam fas ease: quam tamen meretur apud nos certitudinem *Spiritus* testimonio consequi. Etsi enim reverentiam sua sibi ultro majestate

conciliat, tunc tamen demure seriò nos afficit, quum per *Spiritum* obsignata est cordibus nostria. Illius ergo veritate illuminati, jam non aut nostro, aut aliorum judicio credimus a Deo esse Scripturam; sed supra humanum judicium, certo certius constituimus (non secus ac si ipsius Dei numen illic intueremur) hominum ministerio, ab ipsissimo Dei ore ad nos fluxisse. Non argumenta, non verisimilitudines quærimus, quibus judicium nostrum incumbat; sed ut rei extra æstimandi aleam positæ, judicium ingeniumque nostrum subjicimus … Neque qualiter superstitionibus solent miseri homines captivam mentem addicere: sed quia non dubiam vim numinis illic sentimus vigere ac spirare, qua ad parendum, scientes so volentes, vividius tamen et efficacius quam pro humana aut voluntate aut scientia trahimur et accendimur … Talis ergo est *persuasio* quæ rationes non requirat: talis *notitia*, cui optima ratio constet, nempe, in qua securius constantiusque mens quiescit quam in ullis rationibus: talis denique *sensus*, qui nisi ex coelesti revelatione nasci nequeat. *Non* aliud loquor quam quod apud se experitur fidelium unusquisque, nisi quod longe infra justam rei explicationem verba subsidunt." — Calv. *Instit., lib. i. cap. 7, sec. 5*.

Chapter V. Divine revelation itself is the only foundation and reason of faith.

What we have thus far made way for, and what is now our only remaining inquiry is this: What is the work of the Holy Ghost with respect to the objective evidence we have concerning the Scripture — that it is the word of God — which is the formal reason of our faith, and into which our faith is resolved? That is, we come to inquire and to give a direct answer to the question, Why do we believe the Scripture is the word of God? What is it that our faith rests upon in this?

And what is it that makes it the duty of every man to whom it is proposed, to believe that it is the word of God? I will be briefer in this, because I have long since, in another discourse, cleared this argument. And so I will not go over again here, anything that was delivered in the other. This is because what has been questioned or excepted against it up to this day, has been of little weight or consideration. To this great inquiry, therefore, I say —

We believe the Scripture is the word of God with divine faith, for its own sake only; or, our faith is resolved into the authority and truth of God only, as he has revealed himself to us in and by his word. And this authority and

veracity of God infallibly manifest or evince themselves to our faith, or to our minds in the exercise of faith, by the revelation itself in the Scripture, and not otherwise; or, "Thus says the Lord," is the reason why we ought to believe, and why we do believe — why we believe at all in general, and why we believe anything in particular. And we call this *the formal object or reason of faith*.

It is evident that this object is not God himself, absolutely considered; for he is only the *material* object of our faith: "He that comes to God must believe that he exists," Heb 11.6. Nor is it the truth of God absolutely; for we believe that, just as we believe other essential properties of his nature. But it is the truth of God, *revealing* himself — his mind and will — to us in the Scripture. This is the sole reason why we believe anything with divine faith.

It is or may be inquired, why we believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God; or believe that God is one in nature, subsisting in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I answer, it is because God himself, the first truth, who cannot lie, has *revealed* and declared these things to be so; and the one who is our all, requires us to believe them. If it is asked how (in what or by what) God has revealed or declared these things to be so, or what revelation God has made of this, I will answer: It is the Scripture and that only. And if it is asked how I know this Scripture is a divine revelation, that it is the word of God, I will give these answers—

Ans. 1. I do not know it demonstratively, upon rational, scientific principles, because such a divine revelation is not capable of such a demonstration, 1Cor 2.9. [1]

Ans. 2. I do not assent to it, or think it is so, only upon arguments and motives that are highly probable, or morally compelling, as I am assuredly

persuaded of many other things of which I can have no certain demonstration, 1Thes 2.13. [2]

Ans. 3. But I believe it is the word of God, with divine and supernatural faith, resting on and resolved into the authority and veracity of God himself, evidencing themselves to my mind, soul, and conscience, by this revelation itself, and not otherwise.

Here we rest, and we deny that we believe the Scripture is the word of God formally for any other reason than itself, which assures us of its divine authority. If we do not rest here, we must run onto the rock of a moral certainty only, which shakes the foundation of all divine faith; or we must fall into the gulf and labyrinth of an endless circle, in proving two things mutually by one another, such as proving the church by the Scripture and the Scripture by the church, in an everlasting rotation. Unless we intend to wander this way, we must come to something in which we may rest for its own sake; and that is not with a strong and firm opinion, but with divine faith. Nothing can rationally pretend to this privilege, except the truth of God manifesting itself in the Scripture.

And therefore, some of those who will not allow it on this basis, wisely deny that the Scripture's being the word of God, is the object of divine faith *directly*. Rather, it is only the object of a moral persuasion from external arguments and considerations. I believe they will grant that if the Scripture is believed to be the word of God, it must be so for its own sake. There are those who would have us believe that the Scripture is the word of God on the authority of the church —proposing and witnessing to us that it is so, even making a fair appearance of a ready and easy way to exercise faith. [3] Yet, when things come to be sifted and tried, they so confound all sorts of things, that they do not know where to stand or abide. But it is not now my

business to examine their pretenses; I have done it elsewhere. I will therefore prove and establish the assertion laid down, after I have made a way to it by one or two previous observations:

1. We suppose in this, all the motives of credibility mentioned before — that is, all the external arguments (*ab extra*) which vehemently persuade us that the Scripture is the word of God, and with which it may be protected against objections and temptations to the contrary. All of them have their use, and they may be insisted on in their proper place. They should especially be pleaded when the Scripture is attacked by an atheism arising from the love and practice of those lusts and sins which are severely condemned in Scripture, and which are threatened with the utmost vengeance. With other arguments, they may be considered as previous inducements to believing, or as concomitant means to strengthen faith in those who do believe. In the first way, I confess, to the best of my observation of things past and present, their use is not great, nor has it ever been in the church of God. For assuredly, most who sincerely believe the divine origin and authority of the Scripture, do so without any great consideration of such arguments, or being much influenced by them. There are many who, as Austin puts it, are saved by simple faith, "simplicitate credendi," and not by subtle arguments, "subtilitate disputandi" — arguments that, when proposed to them, they are not able to inquire much into, nor apprehend much of their force and efficacy.

Most persons, therefore, are effectively converted to God, and have saving faith — by which they believe the Scripture, and virtually all that is contained in it — before they have ever once considered such arguments. And God forbid that we should think no one can rightly believe the Scriptures except those who are able to apprehend and manage the subtle

arguments of learned men produced in their confirmation! We affirm, on the contrary, that those who believe the Scriptures on no other grounds, indeed, have no true divine faith at all. Hence these arguments were not insisted on of old for ingenerating faith in those to whom the word was preached; nor are they ordinarily so used to this day by any who understand what their work and duty is. But in the second way, wherever there is occasion from objections, oppositions, or temptations, they may be pleaded to good use and purpose. And those who are unavoidably exposed to trials of that nature, may do well to be furnished with them. As for that course which some take in all places and at all times to dispute about the Scriptures and their authority, it is a practice that gives countenance to atheism, and it is to be abhorred by all who fear God; the consequents of it are sufficiently manifest.

2. The ministry of the church, because it is the pillar and ground of truth, upholding and declaring it, is necessary in an ordinary way prior to believing. For "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom 10.17 We believe the Scripture is the word of God *for* itself alone, but not *by* itself alone. The ministry of the word is the means which God has appointed for declaring and making known the testimony which the Holy Spirit gives in the Scripture as to its divine origin. And this is the ordinary way by which men are brought to believe that the Scripture is the word of God. The church in its ministry owns, witnesses, and avows that it is the word of God, and it instructs all sorts of persons out of it. Together with a sense and apprehension of the truth and power of the things that are taught and revealed in it, faith in it as the word of God is ingenerated in them.

3. Here we also suppose the internal effectual work of the Spirit producing faith in us, as declared before, without which we can believe

neither the Scriptures nor anything else with faith divine — not for lack of evidence in them, but for lack of faith in ourselves.

These things being supposed, we affirm that it is the authority and truth of God, manifesting themselves in the supernatural revelation made in the Scripture, that our faith arises from and is resolved into. And in this consists that testimony which the Spirit gives to the word of God, that it *is* his word — for it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

The Holy Ghost being the immediate author of the whole Scripture, he testifies to the divine truth and origin of it in and by this: by the characteristics of divine authority and veracity impressed on it, which evidence themselves in its power and efficacy. Let it be observed that what we assert respects the revelation itself, the Scripture, the writing, [4] and not merely the things written or contained in it. The arguments produced by some to prove the truth of the doctrines of the Scripture, do not reach the cause in hand. For our inquiry is not about believing the truths revealed, but about believing that the revelation itself, the Scripture itself, is divine. And we believe this only because of the authority and veracity of the revealer, that is, of God himself, manifested in it.

To manifest this fully, I will do two things:

1. Prove that our faith is resolved into the Scripture as a divine revelation, and not into anything else. That is, we believe the Scripture is the word of God for its own sake, and not for the sake of anything else whatsoever, either external arguments or the authoritative testimony of men.

2. Show how or by what means the Scripture evidences its own divine origin; or show that the authority of God is so evidenced in and by the Scripture, that we need no other formal cause or reason of our faith, whatever motives or means of believing we may make use of.

As to the first of these —

1. The *formal* reason on which we believe, is that which the Scripture proposes as the *only* reason why we should believe, why it is our duty to do so; and it requires our assent to this. Now, what it proposes, is itself *as* the word of God, and *because* it is the word of God — or it proposes the authority of God *in itself*, and that alone, as what we are to acquiesce in. And the truth of God, and that alone, is what our faith is to rest on and be resolved into. It does not require us to believe it upon the testimony of any church, or any other arguments that the church gives us to prove that it is from God; but it speaks to us immediately in his name; and upon that, it requires faith and obedience.

Some, it may be, will ask whether this proves that the Scripture is the word of God, just because it says so about itself, when any other writing may say the same. But we are not now giving arguments to prove to others that the Scripture is the word of God, but only proving and showing what our own faith rests on and is resolved into, or at least, what it ought to rest on. We will declare afterwards how it evidences itself to our faith that it is the word of God. It is sufficient for our present purpose that God requires us to believe the Scripture for no other reason than because it is his word, or a divine revelation from him. And if it is, then *his authority and truth* are the formal reason why we believe the Scripture, or anything contained in it.

A general attestation is given to it in this sole preface to divine revelations, "Thus says the Lord;" and therefore they are to be believed. Besides this, particular testimonies abound to this purpose. We must mention some of them:

Deu 31.11-13, "When all Israel has come to appear before the Lord your God in the place which he will choose, you shall read this law before all

Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and your stranger that is within your gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God."

Here it is plain that God requires faith and obedience of the whole people — men, women, and children. The question is, what he requires it to. It is to this law, to this law written in the books of Moses, which was to be read to them out of the book. Upon hearing it, they were obliged to believe and obey it. To evidence that the law is His, God proposes nothing but itself. But it will be said, "That generation was sufficiently convinced that the law was from God by the miracles which they beheld when it was given." But more than this, it is ordered to be proposed to children of future generations, who knew nothing, so they may hear it and learn to fear the Lord.

By the appointment of God, what is proposed to those who know nothing, so that they may believe, is the formal reason of their believing. And this is the written word: "You shall read this law to those who have not known anything, that they may hear and learn," etc. Therefore, whatever use there may be for other motives or testimonies to commend the law to us (the ministry of the church especially), what is required here, to propose the word to men, is the law itself, or the written word. This is the object of our faith, and what we believe for its own sake. See also Deu 29.29, where "revealed things" are said to "belong to us and our children, that we might do them," — we who receive them on account of their divine revelation.

Isa 8.19-20, "When they say to you, 'Seek those who have familiar spirits, and wizards that peep and mutter' — should not a people seek their God?

Should the living seek the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The question is, By what means may men be satisfied in their minds and consciences, or what is their faith or trust in? Two things are proposed to this end:

(1.) Immediate diabolical revelations, real or pretended; or

(2.) The written word of God, "the law and the testimony."

We are sent to the written word of God on account of its own authority alone, in opposition to all other pretenses of assurance or security. And the sole reason why anyone does not acquiesce by faith in the written word, is because he has no mornings or light of truth shining on him. But how will we know that the law and testimony, this written word, is the word of God, and believe that it is, and distinguish it from every other pretended divine revelation that is not? This is declared —

Jer 23.28-29, "The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord. Is not my word like a fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

Suppose there are two persons reputed to have divine revelations, and esteemed as "prophets." One of them only pretends to be, and declares as the word of God, the dreams of his own fancy, or the divinations of his own mind. The other has the word of God, and declares it faithfully. Yes, but how will we know one from the other? — even as men know wheat from chaff: by their different natures and effects. Being false, pretended revelations are like chaff, which every wind will scatter. But the true word of God is like a fire and a hammer; it is accompanied with such light, efficacy, and power, that it manifests itself to the consciences of men that it

is his word. God calls us to rest our faith on this, in opposition to all other pretenses whatever.

2. But is it of this authority and efficacy *in itself?*

Luk 16.27-31:"Then he said" (the rich man in hell), "I pray you therefore, father, that you would send him" (Lazarus, who was dead) "to my father's house — for I have five brethren — that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham says to him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear *them*. And he said, No, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

The question here between Abraham and the rich man in this parable — indeed between the wisdom of God and the superstitious contrivances of men — is about the way and means of bringing those who are unbelievers and impenitent, to faith and repentance. The one who was in hell apprehended that nothing would make them believe but a miracle, one rising from the dead and speaking to them. Many at this day think this or similar marvellous operations would have mighty power and influence upon unbelievers, to settle their minds and change their lives.

Surely, if they were to see one "rise from the dead," and come and converse with them, this would convince them of the immortality of the soul, and of future rewards and punishments. It would give them such sufficient evidence of this, that they would assuredly repent and change their lives. As things are stated [in the gospel], their evidence of these things is merely insufficient, and their doubt about them is such that they are not really influenced by them. But give them one real miracle, and you will have them forever.

This, I say, was the opinion and judgment of the one who was presented as being in hell, just as it is the opinion of many who are posting there apace. [5] The one who was in heaven thought otherwise of this; we have the immediate judgment of Jesus Christ given in this matter, thus determining this controversy. The question is about sufficient evidence and efficacy to cause us to believe things that are divine and supernatural; and he determines this is found in the written word, "Moses and the prophets." If someone will not, on the single evidence of the written word, believe that it is from God, or that it is a divine revelation of his will, he will never believe it on the evidence of miracles or any other motives. That written word contains in itself the entire formal reason of faith, or all that evidence of the authority and truth of God, on which divine and supernatural faith rests — that is, it is to be believed for its own sake. But our Lord Jesus Christ himself says, "If men will not hear," that is, if they will not believe, "Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," and came and preached to them — a greater miracle than that, they could not desire. Now, this could not be said if the Scripture did not contain in itself the whole entire formal reason of believing. For if it does not have this, then something necessary to believing would be lacking, even though that were enjoyed. And this is directly affirmed —

Joh 20.30-31, "Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name."

The signs which Christ worked, evidenced that he is the Son of God. But how do we come to know and believe these signs? What is the way and means of it? The blessed apostle says, "These things are written, that you

might believe;" — "This writing of them by divine inspiration is so far sufficient to produce and assure faith in you, that by this you may have eternal life through Jesus Christ." For if the writing of divine things and revelations is the means appointed by God to cause men to believe unto eternal life, then as such, it must carry with it sufficient reason why we should believe, and the grounds on which we should do so. And this matter is determined by the apostle Peter in like manner —

2Pet 1.16-21, "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father, honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. We also have a more sure word of prophecy; to which you do well to take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy did not come in olden times by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The question about the gospel, or the declaration of the powerful coming of Jesus Christ, is whether it should be believed or not; and if it should, then on what grounds? Some said it was a "cunningly-devised fable." Others said it was a fanatical story of madmen, as Festus thought of it when it was preached by Paul, Acts 26.24; and very many are still of the same mind. The apostles, on the contrary, averred that what was spoken concerning him were "words of truth and soberness," indeed, "faithful sayings, and worthy

of all acceptance," 1Tim 1.15; that is, it is to be believed for its worth and truth. The grounds and reasons for this are two:

(1.) The testimony of the apostles, who not only conversed with Jesus Christ and were "eyewitnesses of his majesty," beholding his glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," Joh 1.14 — and which they gave in evidence of the truth of the gospel, 1Joh 1.1 — but they also heard a miraculous testimony given to him immediately from God in heaven, 2Pet 1.17-18. This, indeed, gave them sufficient assurance. But into what will those persons resolve their faith, who did not hear this testimony?

(2.) Why, they have "a more sure" (that is, a *most* sure) "word of prophecy," — that is, the written word of God, that is sufficient of itself to secure their faith in this matter, especially as confirmed by the testimony of the apostles. By this, the church comes to be "built" in its faith "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," Eph 2.20. But why should we believe this word of prophecy? May that not also be a "cunningly-devised fable," and the whole Scripture be only the suggestions of men's private spirits, as it is objected in 2Pet 1.20?

All is finally resolved into this: that its writers were immediately "moved" or activated "by the Holy Ghost." From this divine origin, it carries along its own evidence with it. Plainly, what the apostle teaches us is that we believe all other divine truths for the Scripture's sake, or because they are declared in it. But we believe the Scripture for its *own* sake, or because "holy men of God" wrote it "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The whole object of our faith is thus proposed by the same apostle, in 2Pet 3.2, "That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and by the commandment of the apostles of the Lord

and Savior." And because our faith is resolved into them, we are said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," as it is said in Eph 2.20. That is, our faith rests solely — as on a proper foundation which bears its weight — on the authority and truth of God in their writings. To this we may add this statement of Paul —

Rom 16.25-26, "According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

The matter to be believed is the mystery of the gospel, which was kept secret since the world began, or from the giving of the first promise — not absolutely, but with respect to that full manifestation which it has now received. God commands that this is to be believed. The everlasting God, the one who has sovereign authority over all, requires faith by way of obedience to this.

But what ground or reason do we have to believe it? This alone is proposed: namely, the divine revelation made in the *preaching* of the apostles and the *writings* of the prophets; for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom 10.17. It was this course and no other that our Savior took, even after his resurrection, to produce and confirm faith in the disciples. [6] I will not plead in particular that great testimony to this purpose in 2Tim 3.15-17, [7] because I have so fully insisted on it in another discourse.

From these and many other testimonies to the same purpose which might be produced, it is evident,

1. That it is the Scripture itself, the word or will of God as revealed or written, which is proposed to us as the object of our faith and obedience,

and which we are to receive and believe with divine and supernatural faith.

2. That no other reason is proposed to us either as a motive to encourage us, or as an argument to assure us that we will not be mistaken, except its own divine origin and authority, making our duty necessary and securing our faith infallibly.

To me, those testimonies have a thousand times more weight than the plausible reasonings of any to the contrary. With some, indeed, it has grown into a matter of contempt to quote or cite the Scripture in our writings, such a reverence have they for the ancient fathers — some of whose writings are nothing but a perpetual contexture of Scripture. But for those who pretend to despise those testimonies in *this* case, it is because they either do not understand what they are produced to confirm, or they cannot answer the proof that is in them.

For it is not unlikely that some persons, well-conceited about their own understanding in things which they are most ignorant of, will pride and please themselves in the ridiculousness of proving that the Scripture is the word of God, by testimonies taken from it. But, as was said, we must not forego the truth because they either will not or cannot understand what we are discussing.

Our assertion is confirmed by the uniform practice of the prophets and apostles, and all the penmen of Scripture, in proposing those divine revelations which they received by immediate inspiration from God. For, the reason of the faith of those to whom those divine revelations were first declared, is the reason of our faith now: that they are recorded in the Scripture. For the writing of it being by God's appointment, it comes into the room, and supplies the place, of their oral ministry. On whatever ground men were obliged to receive and believe divine revelations when these were

made to them by the prophets and apostles, we are obliged, on the same ground, to receive and believe them now that they are made to us in the Scripture. The writing is by divine inspiration, and it is appointed as the means and cause of our faith. It is true, God was pleased sometimes to bear witness to their personal ministry by miracles or signs and wonders, as in Heb 2.4, "God bearing them witness;" but this was only at some times, and only with some of them. What they universally insisted on, whether they worked any miracles or not, was that the word which they preached, declared, and wrote, was "not the word of man." It did not come by any private suggestion, or from any invention of their own, but it was "indeed the word of God," 1Thes 2.13; and it was declared by them as they were "acted by the Holy Ghost," 2Pet 1.21.

Under the Old Testament, the prophets sometimes referred persons to the word already written, as that which their faith was to acquiesce in, Isa 8.20, Mal 4.4. [8] They set out its power and excellence for all the ends of faith and obedience, Psa 19.7-9, 119. [9] They set out nothing else, nor any other motives or arguments to produce and require faith, except its own authority. Yet as to their own special messages and revelations, they laid the foundation of all the faith and obedience which they required in this alone: "Thus says the Lord, the God of truth." And under the New Testament, its infallible preachers and writers propose, in the first place, that the writings of the Old Testament are to be received for their own sake, or on account of their divine origin: see Joh 1.45; Luk 16.29, 31; Mat 21.42; Act 18.24, 25, 28, 24.14, 26.22; 2Pet 1.21. [10]

Hence are they called "The oracles of God," Rom 3.2. And oracles always required an assent for their own sake; they pleaded no other evidence. And for the revelations which they superadded, they pleaded that they had them

immediately from God "by Jesus Christ," Gal 1.1. And this was accompanied with such an infallible assurance in those who received them, as to be preferred above a supposition of the highest miracle that would confirm anything to the contrary. For if an angel from heaven were to preach any other doctrine than what they revealed and proposed in the name and authority of God, they were to esteem him accursed, Gal 1.8. For this cause, they still insisted on their apostolic authority and mission (which included infallible inspiration and direction) as the reason of the faith of those to whom they preached and wrote. And as for those who were not themselves divinely inspired, or did not act by immediate inspiration, they proved the truth of what they delivered by its consonancy with the Scriptures already written, referring the minds and consciences of men to them for their ultimate satisfaction, Acts 18.28, 28.23. [11]

It was granted before, that subservient to believing, and as a *means* of it — or to resolve our faith into the authority of God in the Scriptures — what is required is the *ministerial proposal* of the Scriptures and the truths contained in them, with the command of God for obedience to them, Rom 16.25-26. [12] God has appointed this ministry of the church, either extraordinary or ordinary, to this end; and ordinarily it is indispensable to it:

Rom 10.14-15, "How will they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach, unless they are sent?"

Ordinarily, without this, we cannot believe that the Scripture is the word of God, nor that the things contained in it are from him, though we do not believe either one or the other *because* of it. I grant that in extraordinary cases, outward providences may supply the place of this ministerial proposal. For it is all the same, as to our duty, by what means the Scripture

is brought to us. But supposing this ministerial proposal of the word, which ordinarily includes the whole duty of the church in its testimony and declaration of the truth, I desire to know whether those to whom it is proposed are obliged to receive it as the word of God, without further external evidence — to rest their faith on it, and submit their consciences to it? The rule seems plain that they are obliged to do so, Mark 16.16. [13] We may consider this under the distinct ways it is proposed: extraordinary and ordinary.

Upon the preaching of any of the prophets by immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or on their declaration of any *new revelation* they had from God, by preaching or by writing (e.g., Isaiah or Jeremiah), I desire to know whether or not all persons were bound to receive their doctrine as being from God — to *believe* and submit to the *authority* of God in the revelation made by Him, without any *external* motives or arguments, nor the testimony or authority of the church witnessing to it?

If they were not, then those who refused to believe the message these prophets declared in the name of God — despising the *warnings and instructions* which they were given — were all excused as guiltless, for they did not use external motives; and the *existing church* mostly condemned these prophets and their *ministry*, as plain in the case of Jeremiah. Now, it is impious to imagine that those to whom they spoke in the name of God were not obliged to believe them; it tends to overthrow all religion. If we say that they were obliged to believe them, under the penalty of divine displeasure, and so they were to receive the revelation made by them — i.e., on their declaration of it *as the word of God* — then that word must contain in it the formal *reason of* believing, or the full and entire cause, reason, and ground

of why they ought to believe with divine and supernatural faith. [14] Or else, let another ground of faith be assigned in this case.

Suppose the proposal is made in the *ordinary* ministry of the church. Hereby the Scripture is declared to men to be the *word of God*. They are made acquainted with it, and with what God requires of them in it, and they are charged in the name of God to receive and believe it. Does any obligation to believe arise from this? Maybe some will say that, immediately, there is not; they will only grant that men are bound, on this, to *inquire* into those *reasons and motives* which are proposed to them for its reception and admission. I say there is no doubt that men are obliged to consider all things of that nature which are proposed to them, and not to receive it with *brutish, implicit belief* — for receiving it is to be an act of men's own minds or understandings, on the best grounds and evidences which the nature of the thing proposed is capable of.

But suppose that men do their duty in their diligent inquiries into the whole matter. I desire to know whether, by the proposal mentioned, an obligation to believe comes upon men? If there does not, then all men are perfectly innocent who refuse to receive the preaching of the gospel, with respect to *that preaching* — but to say so, is to overthrow the whole dispensation of the ministry. If they are obliged to *believe* upon the preaching of it, then the word has in itself those *evidences* of its divine origin and authority which are a sufficient ground of faith, or reason of believing. For whatever God requires us to believe, always has such evidences.

As the issue of this whole discourse, it is affirmed that our faith is built on and resolved into the *Scripture itself*, which carries with it, its own evidence of being a divine revelation. And therefore, that faith ultimately rests on the

truth and authority of God alone, and not on any human testimony such as that of the church, nor on any rational arguments or motives that are absolutely fallible.

1. **1Cor 2:9** But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
2. **1Thes 2:13** …we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
3. We don't have to believe it is the word of God; we only have to believe the church, which says that it is. Our faith is thus placed in the church, not in the revealed word of God. This is an "easy way to exercise faith" – *blind followers of the blind*, Mat 15.14.
4. τὴν γραφήν (NT:1124, *graphe* – writing) – **Act 1:16** "Men *and* brethren, **this Scripture** had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;
5. *Posting*: riding Western style, bobbing up and down in the saddle in rhythm with a horse's trotting gait.
6. **Luk 24:25** Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! [26] "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" [27] And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.
7. **2Tim 3:15** from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

8. **Isa 8:20** To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. **Mal 4:4** "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With the* statutes and judgments.

9. **Psa 19:7** The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; [8] The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

10. **Joh 1:45** Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **Luk 16:29** "Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' [31] "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" **Mat 21:42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes '? **Act 18:24** Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. [25] This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John… [28] for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. **Act 24:14** "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a

sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. **Act 26:22** "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come; **2Pet 1:21** for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

11. **Act 28:23** So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

12. **Rom 16:25** Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began [26] but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith;

13. **Mar 16:16** "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

14. Blind acceptance of a prophet's claim is prohibited by Scripture, Deu 13:1; 1Joh 4:1. But Owen isn't talking about the *messenger*; he is talking about the *message*, the words of God. Even false prophets can truly speak the words of God; and those words, being self-attesting, are always to be accepted and believed with divine and supernatural faith. – WHG

Chapter VI. The nature of divine revelations

Their self-evidencing power considered, particularly that of the Scriptures as the word of God.

It may be objected that, If the Scripture thus evidences itself to be the word of God — as the sun manifests itself by light, and fire by heat; or as the first principles of reason are evident in themselves without further proof or testimony — then upon the Scripture being proposed to them as the word of God, and on its own bare assertion of it, all men would necessarily and on that evidence alone, assent to this and believe it. But this is not so: all experience lies against it. Nor is there any pleadable ground of reason that it *is* so, or that it *ought* to be so. In answer to this objection I will do these two things:

1. I will show what it is (what power, what faculty in the minds of men) to which this revelation is proposed, and by which we assent to its truth. The mistakes on which this objection proceeds will thus be revealed.

2. I will mention some of those things by which the Holy Ghost testifies and gives evidence to the Scripture in and by itself, such that our faith may

be immediately resolved into the veracity of God alone.

1. In the first place, we may consider that there are *three ways* by which we *assent* to anything that is proposed to us as true, and receive it as such:

(1.) By inbred [1] principles of *natural light*, and the first rational actings of our minds. This *reason*, corresponds to *instinct* in irrational creatures. Hence God complains that his people neglected and sinned against their own natural light and the first dictates of reason, because brute creatures would not forsake the instinctual conduct of their natures, Isa 1.3. [2] In general, the mind is necessarily determined to assent to the proper objects of these principles; it cannot do otherwise. It can only assent to the prime dictates of the light of nature; indeed, those dictates are nothing but its assent. This assent is its first *apprehension* of the things which the light of nature embraces, without either express reasonings or further consideration. Thus the mind embraces in itself the general notions of moral good and evil, with the difference between them, however practically it may fail to comply with what they guide it to. [3] And it assents to many principles of reason, such as "the whole is greater than the part," without allowing any debate about them.

(2.) By *rational consideration* of things externally proposed to us. In this, the mind exercises its discursive faculty, [4] gathering one thing out of another, and concluding one thing from another; and on this, it is able to assent to what is proposed to it in *various degrees of certainty*, according to the nature and degree of the evidence that it proceeds upon. Hence it has a *certain knowledge* of some things. And of others, it has an *opinion* or persuasion that prevails against objections to the contrary, which may be true or false — which it knows and whose force it understands.

(3.) By *faith*. This respects that power of our minds by which we are able to assent to anything as true, which we have no first principles concerning, no inbred notions about, nor can we from more known principles, make any certain rational conclusions concerning them. This is our assent *upon testimony*, on which we believe many things which no sense, inbred principles, nor reasonings of our own, could either give us an acquaintance with, or an assurance of. And this *assent* not only has *various degrees*, but it also has *diverse kinds*, according to the *testimony* which it arises from and rests upon: *human* if it is *human, and divine* if it is divine.

According to these distinct faculties and powers of our souls, God is pleased to reveal or make himself known to us — his mind or will — in *three ways*. For he has implanted no power in our minds whose principal use and exercise does not respect him and living to him, which is the end of them all. Neglecting their improvement to this end, is the highest aggravation of sin. It is an aggravation of sin when men use the creations of God other than he has appointed, or in not using them to his glory — such as when they take his corn, wine, and oil, and spend them on their lusts, Hos 2.8. It is a higher aggravation when, in sinning, men abuse and dishonor their own bodies. For these are the principal external workmanship of God, being made for eternity; and their preservation for his glory is committed to us in a special manner. The apostle declares this is the particular aggravation of the sin of fornication, and uncleanness of any kind, 1Cor 6.18-19. [5] But the height of impiety consists in the abuse of the faculties and powers of the soul, with which we are endowed purposely and immediately for glorifying God. From this proceed unbelief, profaneness, blasphemy, atheism, and similar pollutions of the spirit or mind. And these are sins of the highest provocation; for the powers and faculties of our

minds are given to us only to enable us to live to God. Diverting their principal exercise to other ends is an act of enmity against him, and an affront to him.

(1.) He makes himself known to us by the *innate principles of our nature*, to which he has communicated (as a power of apprehending) an indelible sense of his being, his authority, and his will, so far as our natural dependence on him and moral subjection to him require. For there are two things in this natural light and these first dictates of reason: first, a *power of conceiving*, discerning, and assenting; and secondly, a *power of judging* and determining based on the things so discerned and assented to. By the one, God makes known his being and essential properties; and by the other, he makes known his sovereign authority over all.

As to the first, the apostle affirms in Rom 1.19, "that which may be known of God" (his essence, being, and subsistence; and his natural, necessary, and essential properties) "is manifest in them." That is, it has a self-evidencing power, acting itself in the minds of all men endowed with natural light and reason. And as to the second, his *sovereign authority*, he evidences it in and by the *consciences of men* — which are the judgments they make, and cannot help but make, about themselves and their actions with respect to the authority and judgment of God, Rom 2.14-15. [6] Thus the mind assents to the principles of God's being and authority, prior to any actual exercise of the discursive faculty of reason, or other testimony whatsoever.

(2.) He reveals himself to our *reason in its exercise*, by proposing such things to its consideration from which it cannot help but conclude with an assent to the truth of what God intends to reveal to us that way. He does this by the works of creation and providence, which present themselves

unavoidably to reason in its exercise, to instruct us in the nature, being, and properties of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handywork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard," Psa 19.1-3. Yet they do not thus declare, evidence, and reveal the glory of God to the first principles and notions of natural light, without the actual exercise of reason. They only do so "when we consider his heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and the stars, which he has ordained," as the psalmist puts it in Psalm 8.3. A rational consideration of them — of their greatness, order, beauty, and use — is required for that testimony and evidence which God gives in and by them, of himself, of his glorious being and power.

To this purpose, the apostle discourses at large concerning the works of creation, Rom 1.20-21, [7] and also of the works of providence, Acts 14.15-17, 17.24-28, [8] and the rational use we are to make of them, verse 29. So God calls men to exercise their reason about these things, reproaching them with stupidity and brutishness where they are lacking in this, Isa 46.5-8, 44.18-20. [9]

(3.) God reveals himself to *our faith*, or to that power of our souls by which we are able to assent to the truth of what is proposed to us upon testimony. And he does this by his word, or the Scriptures, proposed to us in the manner and way expressed before.

He does not reveal himself by his word to the principles of natural light, nor to reason in its exercise. Yet these principles, and reason itself, along with all the faculties of our minds, are consequentially affected with that revelation; and they are drawn forth into their proper exercise by it. But in the gospel, the "righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith," Rom

1.17 — it is *not*, in the first place, revealed to natural light, sense, or reason. And it is faith that is "the evidence of things not seen," as revealed in the word, Heb 11.1. "Thus says the Lord" is the only ground and reason of our assent to this kind of revelation; and that assent is the assent of faith, because it is resolved into testimony alone.

Concerning these several ways of communicating or revealing the knowledge of God, it must always be observed that there is a *perfect consonancy in the things revealed by them all*. If anything pretends from the one what is absolutely contradictory to the other, or pretends that our senses are the means of them, then it is not to be received.

The foundation of the whole, as of all the actings of our souls, is in the inbred principles of natural light, or the first necessary dictates of our intellectual, rational nature. So far as it extends, this is a *rule for our apprehension* in all that follows. Therefore, in the exercise of reason, if any pretend to conclude anything concerning the nature, being, or will of God, that is directly *contradictory* to those principles and dictates, then it is not a divine revelation to our reason, but a *paralogism* [10] from the defect of reason in its exercise. This is what the apostle charges and vehemently urges against the *heathen philosophers*: their inbred notions of the being and eternal power of God. These were so manifest in them, that they could not help but own them. They set their rational, *discursive faculty* to work on this, in the consideration of God and his being. But they were so vain and foolish as to draw conclusions *directly contrary* to the first principles of natural light, and the unavoidable notions which they had of the eternal being of God, Rom 1.21-25. [11]

And many, upon their pretended rational consideration of the *promiscuous* [12] *event of things in* the world, have foolishly concluded that all things had

a *fortuitous* [13] *beginning*, and have *fortuitous events*, or from a concatenation of antecedent causes, they are *fatally* [14] *necessary.* They are not disposed by an infinitely wise, unerring, holy providence. This is also directly *contradictory* to the first principles and notions of natural light. Thus it openly proclaims that it is not an effect of the due exercise of reason, but a mere delusion.

So if any pretend to *revelations by faith* which are contradictory to the first principles of natural light, or to reason that is properly exercised about its proper objects, then it is a delusion. On this ground, the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation is justly rejected. For it is proposed as a revelation by faith which is expressly contradictory to our sense and reason, in their proper exercise about their proper objects. And a supposition about the possibility of any such thing, would make the ways by which God reveals and makes himself known, to cross and interfere one with another. This would leave us no certainty in anything, divine or human.

Though these means of divine revelation *harmonize* and perfectly agree with one another, yet they are not *objectively equal*, nor equally extensive; nor are they co-ordinate, but subordinate to one another. Therefore, there are many things that are discernible by the exercise of reason which do not appear to the first principles of natural light. Thus the sober philosophers of old attained to many true and great conceptions of God and the excellencies of his nature, above what those arrived at who either did not, or could not, cultivate and improve the principles of natural light in the same manner as the philosophers. It is therefore folly to pretend that the things which are thus made known by God, are not infallibly true and certain, because they are not obvious to the first conceptions of natural light, without the due exercise of reason (provided they are not contradictory to it). There are

many things revealed to faith that are above and beyond the comprehension of reason, in the best and utmost of its most proper exercise. Such are all the principal mysteries of Christian religion. It is the height of folly to reject them, as some do, just because they are not discernible and comprehensible by reason, seeing that they are not contradictory to it. Therefore, these ways of God's revelation of himself, are not equally extensive or commensurate. But they are so subordinate to one another, that what is lacking in one, is supposed by the other, in order to accomplish the whole and entire end of divine revelation; the truth of God is the same in them all.

(1.) The revelation which God makes of himself in the first way (by the *inbred principles of natural light*), sufficiently and infallibly evidences itself to be from him. It does so in, to, and by those principles themselves.

This revelation of God is infallible; and the assent to it is infallible; and the infallible evidence it gives of itself makes it so. We do not now dispute what a few atheistic sceptics pretend to, whose folly has been sufficiently detected by others. All the sobriety that is in the world consents in this: that the *light of the knowledge of God*, in and by the inbred principles of our minds and consciences, sufficiently, uncontrollably, and infallibly manifests itself to be from Him. And the mind neither is nor can it possibly be imposed on in its apprehensions of that nature. If the first dictates of reason concerning God do not *evidence themselves* to be from God, then they are neither of any use nor force; for they are not capable of being confirmed by external arguments. What is written about them is to *show* their force and evidence, not to *give* them any. Therefore, this first way of God's revelation of himself to us is infallible, and it infallibly evidences itself in our minds, according to the capacity of our natures.

(2.) God reveals himself by the *works of creation and providence to our reason in its exercise*, or to the faculties of our souls as *discursive*, rationally concluding one thing from another. This revelation sufficiently (and indeed, infallibly) evidences and demonstrates itself to be from Him; so that it is impossible for us to be deceived in this. It does not do so to the *inbred principles* of natural light, unless they are engaged in a *rational exercise* about the means of the revelation that is made. That is, we must rationally consider the works of God, both of creation and providence, or we cannot learn by them what God intends to reveal of himself. And in our doing so, we cannot be deceived; for "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," Rom 1.20. They are clearly seen, and therefore they may be perfectly understood as to what they teach about God, without any possibility of mistake. Men will receive the revelation intended, in the way intended. That is, they will certainly conclude that what God teaches by his works of creation and providence — namely, his eternal power and Godhead, with its essential properties, infinite wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and the like — is certainly and infallibly so, believing it accordingly. And wherever they do not, it is not from any defect in the revelation, or its *self-evidencing* efficacy, but only from the depraved, vicious habits of their minds, their enmity against God, and their dislike of him. And so the apostle says that those who rejected or did not approve the revelation of God, did it "because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," Rom 1.28. For this reason, God severely revenged their natural unbelief, as expressed there. [15]

What I principally emphasize from this, is that the revelation which God makes of himself, by the works of creation and providence, does not evince

itself to the first principles of natural light, in such a way that an assent should be given to it without the actual exercise of reason, or without the discursive faculty of our minds about them; but it is to these that it infallibly evidences itself. So the Scripture may have, and does have, a *self-evidencing* efficacy, even though this does not appear to the light of first natural principles, nor even to bare reason in its exercise; for —

(3.) God reveals himself to our *faith* by the *Scripture*, or his word, which he has *magnified above all his name*, Psa 138.2. That is, he has implanted in it more characteristics of himself and his properties than in any other way by which he reveals or makes himself known to us. And we confess that this revelation of God, by his word, is not sufficient nor suited to *evidence itself* to the *light of nature*, or the first principles of our understanding, such that by virtue of the bare proposal that it is from God, we should immediately assent to it, as men assent to self-evident natural principles, like *the part is less than the whole*. Nor does it evidence itself to our *reason* in its mere natural exercise, such that by virtue of this we can demonstratively conclude that it is from God, and that what is declared in it is certainly and infallibly true. It has, indeed, such external evidences accompanying it as to make a great impression on reason itself. But the power of our souls, to which it is proposed, is such that we can give an assent to the truth of something on the testimony of the proposer, even though we have no other evidence of it. And this is the principal and most noble faculty and power of our nature. There is an instinct in brute creatures that has some resemblance to our inbred natural principles. And they will act that instinct, improved by experience, into a great likeness of reason in its exercise, although it is not so. But as to the *power* or *faculty* of giving an assent to things upon witness or testimony, there is nothing in the nature of irrational creatures that has

the least shadow or likeness of it. If our souls lacked but this one faculty of *assenting to truth upon testimony*, all that remains would not be sufficient to conduct us through the affairs of this natural life. Therefore, this being the *most noble faculty* of our minds, it is that to which the highest way of divine revelation is proposed.

We have declared and proved before that our minds, in this special case, are to be *prepared and assisted* by the Holy Ghost to make our assent according to the mind of God, as required of us in a way of duty. On this supposition, the revelation which God makes of himself by his word, no less evidences itself to our minds *in the exercise of faith* — or it gives no less infallible evidence as a ground and reason why we should believe it — than his revelation of himself by the works of creation and providence manifests itself to our minds that it is from him, *in the exercise of reason*.

Nor is this manifested with less assurance than what we assent to, in and by the *dictates of natural light*. And when God reveals himself — that is, his "eternal power and Godhead" — by "the things that are made," Rom 1.20 the works of creation, "the heavens declaring his glory, and the firmament showing his handiwork," Psa 19.1 the reason of men is stirred up and exercised by this. And reason infallibly concludes from the evidence in that revelation, that there is a God, and that he is eternally powerful and wise — without any further arguments to prove that the revelation is true. So when God reveals himself to the minds of men by his word, thereby exciting and bringing out faith into exercise, or the power of the soul to assent to truth upon testimony, that *revelation no less infallibly evidences* itself to be divine or from God, without any external arguments to prove it is so.

If I say to a man that the sun has risen and shines on the earth, and he questions or denies it, and asks how I will prove it, it is a sufficient answer

to say that it *manifests itself* in and by its own light. And if he adds that this is not proof to him, for he does not discern it, then suppose it is so. It is a satisfactory answer to tell him that he is blind; and if he is not blind, it serves no purpose to argue with someone who *contradicts his own sense*; for he leaves no *rule* by which what is said may be tried or judged. And if I tell a man that the "heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork," or that the "invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," and he demands to know how I can prove it, it is a sufficient answer to say that these things, in and by themselves, manifest to the *reason of every man, in its due and proper exercise*, that there is an eternal, infinitely wise and powerful Being — one by whom they were caused, produced, and made, So that whoever knows how to use and exercise his reasoning faculty in considering them — their origin, order, nature, and use — must necessarily conclude that it is so. If he says that it is not apparent to him that the being of God is revealed by them, it is a sufficient reply to say he is *phrenetic* [16] (in case he is indeed), and does not have the use of his *reason*; and if he is not, say that he argues in express contradiction to his own reason, as may be demonstrated. The heathen philosophers granted this. [17]

And if I declare to anyone that the *Scripture is the word of God*, a divine revelation, and that it evidences and manifests itself to be so, and he says that he has the use and exercise of his sense and reason as well as others, and yet it does not appear to him to be so, then as to the present inquiry, it is a sufficient reply — to secure the authority of the Scriptures (though other means may be used for his conviction) — to say that "*all men do not have faith*," by which alone the evidence of the divine authority of the Scripture is discoverable. It is in the light of faith alone that we can read those

characteristics of its divine *extract*, which are impressed on it and communicated to it.

If it is not so, seeing that it is a *divine revelation*, and it is our duty to believe it as such, then it must be either because our faith is not fitted, suited, or able to receive such evidence — assuming God gives the same evidence to the revelation of himself by his word, that he gives by the light of nature and his works of providence — or else, God would not or could not give such evidence to his word that it might manifest itself as such. Neither of these can be affirmed without a sullied reflection on the wisdom and goodness of God.

It is evident from this, that our faith is capable of giving such an assent, because God works it in us and bestows it on us for this very end. And God requires us to infallibly believe what he proposes to us, at least when we have infallible evidence that it is from him. And as he appoints faith to this end, and approves of its exercise, so he both judges and condemns those who fail in it, 2Chr 20.20; Isa 7.9; Mark 16.16. [18] Yes, our faith is capable of giving an assent (though of another kind) that is firmer, and accompanied with more assurance, than any given by reason in the best of its conclusions. And the reason for this is because the power of the mind to give its assent upon testimony, which is its most noble faculty, is elevated and strengthened by the divine supernatural work of the Holy Ghost, described before.

To say that God either could not or would not give such a power to the revelation of himself by his word, so as to evidence itself to be his word, is exceedingly prejudicial to his honor and glory, seeing that the everlasting welfare of the souls of men is incomparably more concerned in this than in the other ways mentioned. And what reason could be assigned to why he

should implant less evidence of his divine authority on this soul than on those others, seeing that he designed far greater and more glorious ends in this, than in them? If anyone says, "The reason is because this kind of divine revelation is not capable of receiving such evidences," it must be either because there cannot be evident characteristics of divine authority, goodness, wisdom, power, implanted in it or mixed with it; or else the efficacy to manifest them cannot be communicated to it. It will be demonstrated in the last part of this discourse, that both these are otherwise. I will now enter upon this.

It has already been declared that it is the *authority and veracity of God, revealed in and by the Scripture, that is the formal reason of our faith, or supernatural assent to it as the word of God*.

2. It remains only that we inquire, in the second place, into the way and means by which they evidence themselves to us that the Scripture is thereby the word of God, so that we may undoubtedly and infallibly believe it is so. Now, because faith, as we have shown, is an *assent upon testimony*, and consequently divine faith is an assent upon *divine* testimony, there must be some testimony or witness in this case, on which faith rests. And this we say is the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the author of the Scriptures, given to them, in them, and by them. And this work or testimony of the Spirit may be reduced to two heads, which may be distinctly insisted on:

(1.) The *impressions* or *characteristics* which are *subjectively* left in and upon the Scripture by its author, the Holy Spirit — of all the divine excellencies or properties of the divine nature — are the first means evidencing the testimony of the Spirit on which our faith rests; or they give the *first evidence* of its divine origin and authority, upon which we believe it. The way by which we learn the eternal power and deity of God from the

works of creation, is only by those marks, tokens, and impressions of his divine power, wisdom, and goodness, that are upon them. For it is from the consideration of their subsistence, greatness, order, and use, that reason necessarily concludes there is an infinite subsisting Being, from whose power and wisdom these things are the manifest effects. These are clearly seen and understood by the things that are made. We need no other arguments to prove that God made the world except itself. It carries in and upon it the infallible tokens of its origin. See to this purpose the blessed meditation of the psalmist in Psalm 104 throughout. Now, there are greater and more evident impressions of divine excellencies left on the written word from the infinite wisdom of its Author, than any that are communicated to the works of God, of whatever sort. Hence David, comparing the *works* and the *word* of God, as to their instructive efficacy in declaring God and his glory (even though he ascribes much to the works of creation), prefers the *word* incomparably before the *works*, Psalms 19.1-3, 7-9, 147.8-9, 19-20. [19] And these more clearly manifest to our faith that the *word* is God's, than the other tokens manifest to our reason that the *works* are His.

As yet I do not know that this is denied by any, or that the contrary is asserted — namely, that God, as the immediate author of the Scripture, has left in the very word itself, evident tokens and impressions of his wisdom, prescience, omniscience, power, goodness, holiness, truth, and other divine, and infinite excellencies, which are sufficiently evidenced to the enlightened minds of believers. Some, I confess, speak suspiciously of this. But until they directly deny it, I not need confirm it further than I have long since done in another treatise. [20] And I leave it to be considered whether, morally speaking, it is possible that God would immediately, from the

eternal counsels of his will, reveal himself, his mind, and the thoughts and purposes of his heart, and yet not give with it or leave on it any "infallible token," evidencing that he is the author of that revelation. These things had been hidden in Him from eternity, on purpose, so that we would believe them and yield obedience to him, according to the declaration thus made of himself. Men who are not ashamed of their Christianity will not be ashamed to profess and seal that profession with their blood, and to rest their eternal concerns on that security which they have attained in this — namely, that there is that manifestation made of the glorious properties of God, in and by the Scripture as a divine revelation, which incomparably excels in evidence all that their reason receives from the works of creation, concerning his power.

That on which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God, with *divine and supernatural faith* (if we believe it at all), is this: There is in itself that evidence of its *divine origin* — from the characteristics of divine excellencies left on it by its author, the Holy Ghost — which faith quietly rests in and is resolved into. This evidence is manifest to the lowliest and most unlearned, no less than it is to the wisest philosopher. And the truth is, if rational arguments and external motives were the sole ground for receiving the Scripture as the word of God, then it could only be that learned men and philosophers would always have been the most forward and ready to admit it, and most firmly to adhere to it and to the profession of it. Because all such arguments prevail on the minds of men as they are able to rightly discern their force and judge them, learned philosophers would have had an incomparable advantage above others. And so some of late have affirmed that it was the wise, rational, and learned men who at first most readily received the gospel! This is an assertion which nothing

could give the least countenance to except gross ignorance of the Scripture itself, and of all the writings concerning the origin of Christianity, whether by Christians or heathens. [21]

From this the Scripture is so often compared to light, or it is called light, "a light shining in a dark place," which will evidence itself to all who are not blind, nor who wilfully shut their eyes, nor have their "eyes blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." 2Cor 4.4 I have handled this consideration at large elsewhere.

(2.) The Spirit of God evidences the *divine origin and authority* of the Scripture by the power and authority which he exerts in it, and by it, over the minds and consciences of men, with its operation of divine effects on them. The apostle expressly affirms that this is the reason and cause of faith: 1Cor 14.24-25, "If all prophesy, and one comes in who does not believe, or is unlearned, he is convinced by all, he is judged by all: and thus the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." The acknowledgment and confession that God is in them, or among them, is a profession of faith in the word administered by them. Such persons assent to its divine authority, or believe it to be the word of God. And it is expressly declared on what evidence or ground of credibility they did so. It was not upon the force of any external arguments produced and pleaded to that purpose; it was not upon the testimony of this or that or any church whatsoever; nor was it upon a conviction of any miracles which they saw worked in its confirmation. Indeed, the ground of the faith and confession declared, is opposed to the efficacy and use of the miraculous gifts of tongues, verses 23, 24. Therefore, the only evidence on which they received

the word, and acknowledged it to be of God, was that divine power and efficacy of which they found and felt the experience in themselves: "He is convinced by all, judged by all; and thus the secrets of his heart are made manifest." Upon this, he falls down before the word, acknowledging its divine authority, finding that it comes upon his conscience with an irresistible power of conviction and judgment on it. "He is convinced by all, judged by all;" he cannot help but grant that there is "a divine efficacy" in it or accompanying it. His mind is especially influenced by this, so that the "secrets of his heart are made manifest" by it. For all men must acknowledge that this is an effect of divine power, seeing that God alone is *kardiognostes*,[22] the one who searches, knows, and judges the heart.[23] If the woman of Samaria believed that Jesus was the Christ because he "told her all the things that she ever did," Joh 4.29, there is reason to believe that this word was from God, and it makes manifest even the secrets of our hearts. Although I conceive that "The word of God" in Heb 4.12,[24] principally intends the living and eternal Word, yet the power and efficacy ascribed to him there, is what he exerts by the word of the gospel.

And so that word also, in its place and use, "pierces even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner" — or, it passes a critical judgment on "the thoughts and intents of the heart;" it makes manifest the secrets of men's hearts, as it is expressed here. By this, then, the Holy Ghost so evidences the divine authority of the word — namely, by that divine power which it has upon our souls and consciences — that we assuredly acquiesce that it is from God. So the Thessalonians are commended that they "did not receive the word as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectively works in those who believe," 1Thes 2.13. It distinguishes itself from the word of men, and it

evidences itself to be the word of God indeed, by its effectual operation in those who believe. The one who has this testimony in himself, has a higher and firmer assurance of the truth than what can be attained by the force of external arguments, or by the credit of human testimony. This is why I say in general, that the Holy Spirit gives testimony to and evinces the divine authority of the word by its powerful operations and divine effects on the souls of those who believe — so that, although it is weakness and foolishness to others, yet, like Christ is to those who are called, it is the power and wisdom of God. [25]

And I must say, that even if a man is furnished with external arguments of all sorts concerning the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures — even if he considers such motives of credibility to be effectively persuasive, and he has the authority of any or all the churches in the world to confirm his persuasion — if he does not have any experience in himself of its divine power, authority, and efficacy, then he does not and cannot believe that it is the word of God in a due manner, not with divine and supernatural faith. But one who has this experience, has that testimony in himself which will never fail. This will be more apparent if we consider a few of those many instances in which the word exerts its power, or if we consider the effects which are produced by it.

The principal divine effect of the word of God is in the conversion of the souls of sinners to God. We have declared at large elsewhere the greatness and glory of this work. And all those who are acquainted with it, as it is declared in the Scripture, and have any experience of it in their own hearts, constantly give it as an instance of the exceeding greatness of the power of God. It may be that those do not speak improperly, who prefer the work of

the new creation before the work of the old (as some of the ancients did), for the express evidences of almighty power contained in it.

Now, the word is the only instrumental cause of this great and glorious effect, by which the divine power operates and expresses itself: for we are "born again," born of God, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever," 1Pet 1.23; for "of his own will God birthed us with the word of truth," Jas 1.18. The word is the seed of the new creature in us, by which our whole nature, our soul and all its faculties, are changed and renewed into the image and likeness of God. And this new nature is kept and preserved by the same word, 1Pet 2.2, [26] and the whole soul is carried on to the enjoyment of God. To believers it is "an ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls," Jas 1.21; the "word of God's grace, which is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among all those who are sanctified," Acts 20.32. And that is because it is the "power of God unto salvation for everyone that believes," Rom 1.16. All the power which God extends and exerts in the communication of that grace and mercy to believers, by which they are gradually carried on and prepared for salvation, he does by the word. In this the divine authority of the word is evidenced in a special manner, by the divine power and efficacy given to it by the Holy Ghost. The work which is effected by it — in the regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of the souls of believers — infallibly evidences to their consciences that it is not the word of man, but of God.

It will be said, "This testimony is private in the minds only of those on whom this work is wrought," and therefore I can press it no further than, "he that believes has the witness in himself," Joh 5.10. Let it be granted that all who are really converted to God by the power of the word, have that infallible evidence and testimony of its divine origin, authority, and power

in their own souls and consciences. It is true only of those who believe it with divine and supernatural faith in conjunction with the other evidences mentioned before, as parts of the same divine testimony. And that is all I aim at in this.

Yet, even though this testimony is privately received (for in itself it is not private, but common to all believers), it is ministerially pleadable in the church as a principal motive for believing. A declaration of the divine power which some have found by experience in the word, is an ordinance of God to convince others and to bring them to the faith. Indeed, of all the external arguments that are or may be pleaded to justify the divine authority of the Scripture, there is none more prevalent nor cogent than this one: its mighty efficacy on the souls of men, in all ages, to change, convert, and renew them into the image and likeness of God, which has been visible and manifest.

Moreover, there are still other particular effects of the divine power of the word on the minds and consciences of men, belonging to this general work (either preceding or following it) which are clearly perceivable, and enlarge the evidence; such as —

(1.) The work of *conviction of sin* on those who did not expect it, who did not desire it, and who would avoid it if they could by any means possible. The world is filled with instances of this nature. While men are full of love for their sins, at peace in them, enjoying the benefit and advantage of them, the word comes upon them in its power. It has awed, disquieted, and terrified them, taken away their peace, destroyed their hopes, and made them conclude that if they do not comply with what is proposed to them in that word — which they took no notice of before, nor had any regard for — they must be miserable, presently or eternally. This is, as it were, whether

they would have it or not — contrary to their desires, inclinations, and carnal affections.

Conscience is the territory or dominion of God in man, which he has so reserved to himself that no human power can possibly enter into it or dispose of it in any way. But in this work of *conviction of sin*, the word of God, *the Scripture*, enters into the conscience of the sinner, takes possession of it, and disposes it to peace or to trouble by its laws or rules, and not otherwise. Where it gives disquietude, all the world cannot give it peace; and where it speaks peace, none can give it trouble. If this were not the *word of God*, how would it thus come to speak in His name, and to act His authority in the consciences of men as it does? Once it begins this work, the conscience immediately possesses a *new rule, a new law, a new government*, in accord with the judgment of God upon it and all its actions. It is contrary to the nature of conscience to take this upon itself; nor would it do so unless it senses God speaking and acting in it and by it: see 1Cor 14.24-25. [27] An invasion may be made on the *outward duties* that conscience disposes us to; but none can be made on its *internal actings*. No power under heaven can cause the conscience to think, act, or judge other than it does by its immediate respect to God. For conscience is the mind's *self-judging* with respect to God; what does not repect Him, is not an act of conscience. Therefore, to *force* an act of conscience implies a contradiction. However far the conscience may be defiled, bribed, seared, and at length utterly debauched, it cannot admit a superior power, a power that is above or over itself, that is less than God himself.

I know conscience may be prepossessed with prejudices; and by education, with the insinuation of traditions, it may take on itself the power of false, corrupt, superstitious principles and errors, as a means to convey to

itself a sense of “divine” authority. So is it with the Mohammedans and other false worshippers in the world. But the power of those divine convictions which we treat, is manifestly different from such prejudiced opinions.

For where these are not imposed on men by artifices and easily discoverable delusions, they prepossess their minds and inclinations by traditions, prior to any right judgment they can make about themselves or other things. And they are generally wrapped up and preserved in their secular interests. The convictions we treat come upon the minds of men from without, and that is with a perceptible power prevailing over all their previous thoughts and inclinations. These convictions first affect, deceive, and delude the notional part of the soul, by which the conscience is imperceptibly influenced and diverted into improper respects, and deceived as to its judgment about the voice of God. They immediately principle [28] the practical understanding and self-judging power of the soul. Therefore, such opinions and persuasions are gradually insinuated into the mind, and are insensibly admitted without opposition or reluctance, never being confronted at their first admission with any secular disadvantage.

But these *divine* convictions by the word befall some men when they think of nothing less, and desire nothing less — some, when they design other things, such as pleasing their own ears or entertaining their company; and some purposely deride and scoff at what is spoken to them from it. It might also be added for the same purpose, how confirmed some have been in their carnal peace and security by the love of sin, with innumerable inveterate prejudices. By admitting such convictions, what losses and ruin to their outward concerns many have fallen into; what force, diligence, and artifices have been used to defeat them; and what aid and assistance there

has been from Satan to this purpose. And yet against all this, the divine power of the word has absolutely prevailed and accomplished its whole designed effect. [29]

(2.) The word does this by the light that is in it, and that spiritual illuminating efficacy which accompanies it. Hence it is called a "light shining in a dark place," 2Pet 1.19; that light by which God "shines in the hearts" and minds of men, 2Cor 4.4, 6. Without the Scripture, all the world is in darkness: "Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people," Isa 60.2. It is the kingdom of Satan, filled with darkness and confusion. Superstition, idolatry, lying vanities — in which men do not know at all what they do, or where they go — these fill the whole world, even as it is at this day. And the minds of men are naturally in darkness. There is such a blindness upon them that they cannot see or discern spiritual things — not even when they are externally proposed to them, as I evinced at large elsewhere. And no man can give greater evidence that this is so, than the one who denies it. With respect to both these kinds of darkness, the Scripture is a light, and it is accompanied with a spiritual illuminating efficacy, thereby evidencing that it is a divine revelation.

For what else but divine truth could recall the minds of men from all their wanderings into error, superstition, and other effects of darkness — things which they love more than truth? All things are filled with vanity, error, and confusion, with misapprehensions about God and ourselves, our duty and end, our misery and blessedness. But where the Scripture is communicated by the providence of God, it comes in as a light into a dark place, revealing all things clearly and steadily that concern either God or ourselves. It reveals our present or future condition, causing all the ghosts and false images of things which men had framed and fancied for themselves in the

dark, to vanish and disappear. *Digitus Dei!* [30] — this is none other than the power of God. But principally it evinces its divine efficacy by that *spiritual saving light* which it conveys into and implants on the minds of believers. Hence, even though they do not know the ways and method of the Spirit's operations by the word, there is none that has gained any experience by observing God's dealings with them, who cannot say with the man to whom the Lord Jesus restored his sight, "One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." Joh 9.25 The apostle declares this power of the word as the instrument of the Spirit of God, for communicating saving light and knowledge to the minds of men, in 2Cor 3.18, 4.4, 6. [31] By the efficacy of this power, he evidences that the Scripture is the word of God. Those who believe, find by it a glorious, supernatural light introduced into their minds, by which those who previously saw nothing in a distinct, affecting manner in spiritual things, now clearly discern the truth, glory, beauty, and excellence of heavenly mysteries, and have their minds transformed into their image and likeness. And there is no person who has the witness in himself of the kindling of this heavenly light in his mind by the word, who does not also have the evidence in himself of its divine origin.

(3.) In like manner, it evidences its divine authority by the *awe* which it puts on the minds of *most of mankind* to whom it is made known, so that they dare not absolutely reject it. There are multitudes to whom the word is declared, who *hate* all its precepts, *despise* all its promises, *abhor* all its threatenings — who like nothing, and approve of nothing, that the word declares or proposes — and yet they dare not absolutely refuse or reject it. They deal with it as they do with God himself (whom they also hate), according to the revelation which he has made of himself in his word. They wish he did not exist; sometimes they hope he does not. They would be glad

to be free of his rule. Yet they dare not, *cannot* absolutely deny and disown him, because of that testimony of himself which he keeps alive in them, whether they will it or not.

This is the frame of their hearts and minds towards the Scripture — for no other reason than it is the word of God, and manifests itself to be His. They hate it, wish it were not true, hope it is not true; but they are not by any means able to shake off a disquiet in the sense of its divine authority. It has fixed this testimony in the hearts of multitudes of its enemies, Psa 45.5. [32]

(4.) It evidences its divine power in *administering strong consolations* in the deepest and most unrelievable distresses. There are such distresses which many men fall into, in which all means and hopes of relief may be utterly removed and taken away. So it is when the miseries of men are not known to anyone who would so much as pity them or wish them relief. Or if they have been known, and there has been an eye to pity them, there has been no hand to help them. Such has been the condition of innumerable souls. As it is on other accounts, so it is in particular under the power of persecutors, when believers have been shut up in filthy and nasty dungeons, not to be brought out except unto death by the most exquisite tortures that the malice of hell could invent, or the bloody cruelty of man can inflict. Yet in these and like distresses, the word of God, by its divine power and efficacy, breaks through all interposing difficulties, all dark and discouraging circumstances, supporting, refreshing, and comforting such poor distressed sufferers. Indeed, under overwhelming calamities, it commonly fills them with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1Pet 1.18 Though they are in bonds, the word of God is not bound; nor can all the power of hell, nor all the diligence or fury of men, keep the word from entering into prisons, dungeons, and flames, to administer strong

consolations against all fears, pains, wants, dangers, deaths, or whatever else we may be exposed to in this mortal life.

Various other instances of like nature might be pleaded, in which the word gives evident demonstration to the minds and consciences of men, of its own divine power and authority. This is the second way by which the Holy Ghost, its author, gives testimony to its origin.

But what we designed to declare is not merely the grounds and reasons for which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God. What was proposed for consideration is the whole work of the Holy Spirit in enabling us to believe it is so. And beyond what we have insisted on, there is yet a further particular work of his, by which he effectively ascertains our minds that the Scriptures are the word of God, and by which we are ultimately established in the faith of it. I cannot help but both admire and bewail that this would be denied by any who would be esteemed Christians.

Thus, if there is any necessity for this, I will take occasion in the *second part* of this discourse to further confirm this part of the truth thus far debated — namely, *that God by his Holy Spirit secretly and effectively persuades and satisfies the minds and souls of believers in the divine truth and authority of the Scriptures*. By this, he infallibly secures their faith against all objections and temptations whatsoever, so that they can safely and comfortably dispose [33] their souls in all their concerns, with respect to this life and to eternity, according to its undeceivable truth and guidance. But I will not further emphasize these things at present.

1. *Inbred*: inherent – normally existing at conception.
2. **Isa 1:3** The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; *But* Israel does not know, My people do not consider."
3. **Jud 1:10** But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.
4. *Discursive*: proceeding to a conclusion by reason or argument rather than intuition.
5. **1Cor 6:18** Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?
6. **Rom 2:14** for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, [15] who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*);
7. **Rom 1:20** For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, [21] because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
8. **Act 14:15** and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth,

the sea, and all things that are in them, [16] "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. [17] "Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." **Act 17:24** "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. [25] "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. [26] "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, [27] "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; [28] "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' **Act 17:29** "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

9. **Isa 46:5** "To whom will you liken Me, and make *Me* equal And compare Me, that we should be alike? [6] They lavish gold out of the bag, And weigh silver on the scales; They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god; They prostrate themselves, yes, they worship. [7] They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it And set it in its place, and it stands; From its place it shall not move. Though *one* cries out to it, yet it cannot answer Nor save him out of his trouble. [8] "Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O you transgressors. **Isa 44:18** They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, *And* their hearts, so that they cannot understand. [19] And no one considers in his heart, Nor *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire, Yes, I have

also baked bread on its coals; I have roasted meat and eaten *it*; And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" [20] He feeds on ashes; A deceived heart has turned him aside; And he cannot deliver his soul, Nor say, "*Is there* not a lie in my right hand?"

10. *Paralogism*: an unintentionally invalid argument.

11. **Rom 1:21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Professing to be wise, they became fools, [23] and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. [24] Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, [25] who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

12. *Promiscuous*: made up of various disparate elements mixed together; with a disorderly composition.

13. *Fortuitous*: having no cause, or no apparent cause (it was luck, chance, or a random outcome).

14. *Fatally*: inevitably.

15. **Isa 46:8** "Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O you transgressors. [9] Remember the former things of old, For I *am* God, and *there is* no other; *I am* God, and *there is* none like Me; **Isa 44:19** [of idols] no one considers in his heart, Nor *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire, Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals; I have roasted meat and eaten *it*; And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" [20] He feeds on

ashes; A deceived heart has turned him aside; And he cannot deliver his soul, Nor say, "*Is there* not a lie in my right hand?"

16. *Phrenetic*: frenzied or in a fit of madness; excessively agitated; distraught with fear or other violent emotion.

17. "Quid enim potest," says Cicero, "esse tam apertum, tamque perspicuum, cùm coelum suspeximus, coelestiaque contemplati sumus, quàm esse aliquod numen præstantissimæ mentis, quo hæc regantur? … Quod qui dubitet, haud sane intelligo cur non idem, sol sit, an nullus sit, dubitare possit," *De Natura Deor. lib. ii. 2*. I certainly do not see why the man who doubted this should not also be capable of doubting whether there is, or is not, a sun… We know it as the perception and conviction of our minds; otherwise the belief would not endure with such stability; *Nature of the Gods*, book ii.2, translated by Francis Brooks.

18. **2Chr 20:20** So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." **Isa 7:9** The head of Ephraim *is* Samaria, And the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established." **Mar 16:16** "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

19. **Psa 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. [2] Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. [3] *There is* no speech nor language *Where* their voice is not heard. **Psa 19:7-9** The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; [8] The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD

is pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. **Psa 147:8-9** Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains. [9] He gives to the beast its food, *And* to the young ravens that cry. **Psa 147:19-20** He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. [20] He has not dealt thus with any nation; And *as for His* judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!

20. In the "Divine Original of Sacred Scripture." — Ed.

21. **1Cor 1:23, 26** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness… [26] For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.

22. καρδιογνώστης [NT:2589] – heart-knower.

23. **Act 15:8** "So God, **who knows the heart**, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us;

24. **Heb 4:12** For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

25. **1Cor 1:23** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

26. **1Pe 2:2** as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby;

27. **1Cor 14:24-25** But if all prophesy [i.e., speak the word of God], and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is

convicted by all. [25] And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

28. *Principle*: verb – to impress with any tenet or rule of conduct.

29. **2Cor 10:4** For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, [5] casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; **Jer 23:29** "*Is* not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces? **Zec 1:6** Yet surely My words and My statutes, Which I commanded My servants the prophets, Did they not overtake your fathers? "So they returned and said: 'Just as the LORD of hosts determined to do to us, According to our ways and according to our deeds, So He has dealt with us.

30. The finger of God. Exo 8.19.

31. **2Cor 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. **2Cor 4:4** whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them... [6] For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

32. **Psa 45:5** Your arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; The peoples fall under You.

33. *Dispose*: make receptive or willing towards an action or attitude or belief; to make fit or prepared.

Chapter VII. Inferences from the whole — Some objections answered.

Three things offer themselves for consideration from what has been discussed:

1. What the ground and reason is for why the lowliest and most unlearned sort of believers assent to this truth *that the Scriptures are the word of God*, with no less firmness, certainty, and *assurance* of mind, than the wisest and most learned of them. Indeed, often the faith of the former sort in this has the best growth and firmest consistency against oppositions and temptations. Now, no *assent of the mind* can be accompanied with any more assurance than *the evidence* will afford — whose effect it is, and which it is resolved into. Nor does any evidence of truth produce an assent to it in the mind, except as it is apprehended and understood. Therefore, the evidence of this truth, in whatever it consists, must be what is perceived, apprehended, and understood, by the lowliest and most unlearned sort of true believers. For as it was said, they no less firmly assent and adhere to it than the wisest and most learned of them. It cannot, therefore, consist in such subtle and learned arguments, whose sense they cannot understand or

comprehend. But the things we have pleaded are of another nature. For those *characteristics* of divine wisdom, goodness, holiness, grace, and sovereign authority, which are implanted in the Scripture by the Holy Ghost, are as legible to the faith of the lowliest, as they are to that of the most learned believer. Also, they are no less capable of an experiential *understanding* of the divine power and efficacy of the Scripture, in all its spiritual operations, than those who are wiser and more skilful in discerning the force of *external arguments and* motives of credibility. Therefore, of necessity it must be granted that the formal reason of faith consists in those things of which the evidence is equally obvious to all sorts of believers.

2. This is why the assent of faith, by which we believe that the Scriptures are the word of God, is usually accompanied with more *assurance* than any assent which comes from the effect of science upon the most demonstrative principles. Those who affirm this, do not consider faith as it is in this or that individual person, or in all who sincerely believe; but as it is in its own nature and essence, and what it is fit and able to produce. The schoolmen [1] distinguish between a *certainty* or *assurance of evidence*, and an *assurance of adherence*. In the latter, they say, the certainty of *faith* exceeds that of science; but it is less so in respect to the former. But it is not easily conceived how certainty of adherence should exceed the certainty of evidence, with respect to any object whatsoever. What seems to render a difference in this case, is that the evidence which we have in scientific things is speculative; it affects only the *mind*. But the evidence we have by faith effectively works on the *will* also, because of the goodness and excellence of the things that are believed. Hence the whole soul more firmly adheres to the objects of faith upon that evidence which it has of them, than to other things of which it has clearer evidence, and in which the will and

affections are little or not at all concerned. Bonaventure gives a reason of no small weight, why faith is more certain than science — not with the certainty of speculation, but with the certainty of adherence. [2] And whatever may be said of this distinction, I think it cannot modestly be denied that there is a greater assurance in faith than there is in any scientific conclusions, until there are as many good and wise men who would part with all their worldly concerns and their lives, by the most exquisite tortures, in the confirmation of any truth which they have received merely on the ground of reason acting in human sciences, as those who have so done on the certainty which they had by faith, that the Scripture is a divine revelation. For in bearing testimony to this, innumerable multitudes of the best, the holiest, and the wisest men ever in the world, have cheerfully and joyfully sacrificed all their temporal concerns, and ventured all their eternal concerns. For they did it under a full satisfaction that in parting with all temporary things, they would be eternally blessed or eternally miserable, according to whether their persuasion in faith proved true or false.

Thus, for the firmness and constancy which we have in the assurance of faith, three things concur:

(1.) That this *ability of assent upon testimony is* the highest and most noble power or faculty of our rational souls. And therefore, where it has the highest evidence of which it is capable — which it has in the testimony of God — it gives us the highest certainty or assurance of which we are capable in this world.

(2.) For the assent of divine faith, there is required a special *internal operation of the Holy Ghost*. This renders it of another nature than any mere natural act and operation of our minds. And therefore, if the assurance of it may not properly be said to exceed the assurance of science in degree, it is

only because it is of a more excellent kind; and so it is not capable of comparison to it as to degrees.

(3.) The revelation which God makes of himself, of his mind and will, by his word, is more *excellent*, and it is accompanied with greater evidence of his *infinitely glorious properties — in which* alone the mind can find absolute rest and satisfaction (which is its assurance) — than any other discovery of truth is capable of, whatever sort it is. Nor is the assurance of the mind *absolutely perfect* in anything beneath the enjoyment of God. Thus, by faith the soul makes the nearest approaches it is capable of in this life, to the eternal spring of being, truth, and goodness. It has in this the highest rest, satisfaction, and assurance that it can attain in this life.

3. It follows from this that those who would deny either of these two things, or separate them so as to exclude the *necessity* of either to the duty of believing — namely, the *internal work* of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, enabling them to believe, and the *external work* of the same Holy Spirit, giving evidence in and by the Scripture to its own divine origin — endeavor to expel all true divine faith from the world, and to substitute in its place, a probable persuasion.

For a close to this discourse, which has now been drawn out to a greater length than was intended at first, I will consider some objections that are usually pleaded in opposition to the truth asserted and vindicated:

Obj. 1. It is objected in the first place that,

"The plea insisted on here, cannot be managed without great disadvantage to Christian religion. For if we take away the *rational grounds* on which we believe the doctrine of Christ to be true and divine, and the whole evidence of its truth is laid on things that are not only derided by men of *atheistic*

spirits, but cannot be discerned by anyone except believers, then on what *grounds* can we proceed to convince an unbeliever?"

Ans. 1. By the way, it is one thing to prove and believe that the doctrine of Christ is true and divine; and another to prove and believe that the Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, or by the divine authority of the Scripture; this alone is what was proposed for consideration. A doctrine that is true and divine may be written down and proposed to us in writings that were *not divinely and infallibly inspired*; and so the doctrine of Christ might have been written — but not without unspeakable disadvantage to the church. And there are various arguments which forcefully and effectively prove that the doctrine of Christ was *true and divine*, which have no efficacy to prove the divine authority of the Scriptures. Though, on the other hand, whatever does prove the divine authority of the Scriptures, equally proves the divine truth of the doctrine of Christ.

Ans. 2. There are two ways of *convincing unbelievers* — the one insisted on by the *apostles and their followers*, and the other by some *learned* men since their days. The way principally insisted on by the apostles was by *preaching* the word itself to them in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit. By the power of this, manifesting the authority of God in it, unbelievers were convinced, and falling down, they acknowledged God to truly be in it, 1Cor 2.4-5, 14.24-25. [3] It is likely that in their proposal of the gospel to unbelievers (of the doctrine and truths contained in it), those of *atheistic spirits* would deride both the apostles and the gospel. And so indeed it came to pass that many considered *them* to be *babblers*, and their doctrine to be *arrant folly*. [4] Yet the apostles did not desist from pursuing their work in the same way; and God gave success to it. The other way is to prove to *unbelievers* that the *Scripture is true and divine* by rational

arguments; in which some learned persons have labored to very good purpose, especially in these last ages. And certainly their labors are to be greatly commended while they attend to these rules:

(1.) That they produce no arguments except those which are cogent, and not liable to just exceptions. For if, to manifest their own skill or learning, they plead those reasons which are capable of disproof and other solutions, they overly prejudice the truth by subjecting it to dubious *disputes* — because in itself, the truth is clear, firm, and sacred.

(2.) That they do not pretend their rational grounds and arguments are the sole foundation faith has to rest upon, or which it is resolved into; for this would be the ready way to set up an *opinion*, instead of supernatural and divine faith.

Accept these two limitations, and it is acknowledged that the rational grounds and arguments intended may be rationally pleaded (and ought to be) for the conviction of gainsayers. For no man so pleads the *self-evidencing power* of the Scripture, as to deny that the use of other external motives and arguments is necessary to close the mouths of *atheists,* and to further establish those who believe. These things are subordinate, and in no way inconsistent.

The truth is, if we attend to our own experience and that of the whole church of God, this is ordinarily the way by which we come to believe that the Scripture is the *word of God*, and no other. God, having first given *his word* as the foundation of our faith and obedience, has appointed the *ministry of men* — at first extraordinary and afterward ordinary — to propose to us the doctrines, truths, precepts, promises, and threatenings contained in it. Together with this proposition, they are appointed to declare that these things are *not from themselves*, nor of their *own invention*, 2Tim

3.14-17. [5] And this is done variously. The word of God in this *ministry* is thus proposed, preached, or declared to some, while they are in a condition not only utterly unacquainted with the mysteries of it, but filled with contrary apprehensions of it; and consequently, they are prejudiced against it. Thus it came of old to the *pagan world*, and it must do so to those persons and nations which are still in the same state as them. The first preachers of the gospel did not produce the *book of the Scriptures* to these people, and tell them that it was the word of God, and that it would evidence itself to them as such. For this would have been to despise the wisdom and authority of God in their own ministry. Rather, they preached its doctrines to them, grounding themselves on the divine revelation contained in it. And this proposition of the truth, or preaching of the gospel, was not *left by God* to work itself into the reason of men by its suitableness to their reason. But the gospel being of his own *institution* for their illumination and conversion, God accompanied it with divine power, and made it effectual for the ends designed, Rom 1.16. And the event of this among mankind was that this new *doctrine* was derided and scorned by *some*; and it was embraced and submitted to by *others*, whose *hearts God opened to attend to it*. Among those who, after the propagation of the gospel, are born *within the pale of the church*, as they say, the same doctrine is variously instilled according to the several duties and concerns of others to instruct them. Principally, the *ministry of the word* is ordained by God to that end, upon which the church is the pillar and ground of truth. Those of both sorts to whom the doctrine mentioned is preached or proposed, are directed to the Scriptures as the sacred repository of it — for they are told that these things come by *revelation* from God, and that that revelation is contained in the *Bible*, which is his word. Upon this proposal, inquiring into

it and considering it, God co-operating by his Spirit, there is such evidence of its divine origin communicated to their minds through its power and efficacy, with the characteristics of divine wisdom and holiness implanted on it (which they are now enabled to discern), that they believe it, and rest in it, as the immediate word of God.

Thus it was in the case of the woman of Samaria and the inhabitants of Sychar with respect to their faith in Christ Jesus, Joh 4.42. [6] This is the way by which men ordinarily are brought to believe the word of God, Rom 10.14, 15, 17. [7] And that is neither by external arguments nor motives, which no soul was ever converted to God by; nor by any mere naked proposal and offer of the book to them; nor by miracles; nor by immediate revelation or private subjective testimony of the Spirit. Nor is their faith a persuasion of mind that they can give no reason for, except that they are so persuaded.

Obj. 2. But it will be still further objected that,

"If there is such clear evidence in the thing itself, that is, in the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures, that none who freely use their reason can deny it, then it lies in the naked proposal of the thing to the understanding — and if this is so, then everyone who assents to the proposition that, '*The whole is greater than the part*,' must likewise assent to this proposition that, *'The Scripture is the word of God*.' Otherwise, the evidence must not lie in the naked proposal, but in the efficacy of the Spirit of God in the minds of those to whom it is proposed."

Ans. 1. I know of no divine, ancient or modern, popish or protestant, who does not assert that there is a work of the Holy Ghost on the minds of men that is necessary to a due belief that the Scripture is the word of God; and the consideration of this should not be excluded by any Christian. But they

do not say that this is the objective testimony or evidence on which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God, which alone is what our inquiry concerns.

Ans. 2. We do not dispute how far or by what means this proposition, "*The Scripture is the word of God*," may be evidenced not merely to our reason, but to our *understanding*, as capable of giving an assent upon testimony. And it is not said that this is a first principle of reason, though it is a first principle of faith. Nor is it said that it is capable of *mathematical demonstration*. It is self-evident to our reason on its first proposal, that the whole is greater than the part; but none pretends such self-evidence is in the Scripture, because it is not a subject capable of it. Nor do those who deny the self-evidence of the Scripture pretend, by their arguments for its divine authority, to give such an evidence of it to reason, as there is in first principles or *mathematical demonstrations*. Rather, they content themselves with what they call a "moral certainty." But it is by *faith* that we are obliged to receive the truth of this proposition. This respects the power of our minds to assent to truth upon testimony — infallibly on that which is infallible. It evidences its own truth to the mind, not with the same, but with an evidence and certainty of a *higher* nature, and a *nobler* kind, than that of the strictest demonstration in natural things, or the most forcible argument in moral things.

3. It will be objected that,

"If this is so, then none can be *obliged to receive the Scripture* as the word of God who does not have faith; and none has faith but those in whom it is worked by the Spirit of God; and all will be resolved into this at last."

*Ans.*1. Indeed, there is no place for this objection, for the whole work of the Spirit is pleaded only as he is the *efficient cause of believing*, and not

the *objective cause*, or reason why we believe.

But —

Ans. 2. We must not be ashamed to resolve all that we do well spiritually, and in obedience to the command of God, into the efficacious operation of the Holy Ghost in us, unless we intend to be ashamed of the gospel. But this still makes his *internal operation* to be the *efficient cause*, and not his *internal testimony* to be the *formal cause*, or reason of our faith.

Ans. 3. It is another question whether all obligation to duty is and must be proportionate to our own strength, without divine assistance. We deny this, and affirm we are obliged to many things by virtue of God's *command* which we have no power to answer, except by virtue of his *grace*.

Ans. 4. Where the proposal of the Scripture is made in the way described before, those to whom it is proposed are obliged to receive it as the word of God, upon the evidence which it gives of itself as such. Yes, every real, true, divine revelation made to men, or every proposal of the Scripture by divine providence, has that evidence accompanying it (of its being from God) that is sufficient to *oblige those* to whom it was made, to believe it on pain of His displeasure. If this were otherwise, then God would either be obliged to confirm every particular divine revelation with a miracle (which does not lack its difficulty as to its obliging us to believe); [8] which he did not do in many of the prophets; nor does he do so at this day in the first proposal of the gospel to the heathen. Or else, when he requires faith and obedience in those ways which, in his wisdom, he judges fit — that is, in the ordinary ministry of the word — they are not obliged by it; nor would it be their sin to refuse to comply with his will. [9]

Ans. 5. If this difficulty cannot be avoided other than by affirming that the faith which God requires of us with respect to his word, is nothing but a

natural assent to it, upon rational arguments and considerations which we have an ability for, without any spiritual aid of the Holy Ghost or any respect to his testimony, as described before (which overthrows all faith, especially that which is divine), I would rather allow ten thousand times, all the just consequences that can follow on the supposition mentioned, than admit this relief. But this has none of those consequences that would exempt anyone to whom the Scripture is proposed, from an obligation to believe it.

In like manner, there is no difficulty in the usual objection that respects particular books of the Scripture, as to why we receive some as *canonical* and reject others — such as receiving the *Book of Proverbs, and not of Wisdom*, *Ecclesiastes and not Ecclesiasticus*: for —

1. As to the books of the Old Testament, we have the canon of those books given to us in the New, where it is affirmed that *the oracles of God were committed* to the *church of the Jews*. This both confirms all that we receive, and it excludes all that we exclude. And for the New Testament, there are no pretenders to it, nor were there ever, to the least exercise of the faith of anyone in them.

2. All books whatever, that have either pretended to a divine origin, or have been pleaded by others to be of that extraction, have been evicted by falsehood in that pretense (and may be of themselves, without further help). All of them up to now, in matter or manner, in plain confessions or on other sufficient evidence, have manifested that they are of a human origin. And not much danger is to be feared from any in the future, that will be presented with the same pretense.

3. We are not bound to refuse the *ministry of the church*, or the advantages of providence by which the Scripture is brought to us, along with the

testimonies which any one part of it gives to another, either directly or collaterally. Although the Scripture is to be believed *for itself*, it is not ordinarily to be believed *by itself*, without the help of other means. [10]

4. On these suppositions I do not fear to affirm that there are on every *individual book of the Scripture*, particularly those named, those divine characteristics and *criteria* which are sufficient to differentiate them from all other writings whatsoever, and to testify of their divine authority to the minds and consciences of believers. I say of *believers*, for we do not inquire on what ground unbelievers, or those who do not believe, would believe the word of God, nor yet directly on what outward motives such persons may be induced to do so. Our sole inquiry at present is, what the faith of those *who do believe* is resolved into. We acknowledge that the reason for first giving out divine revelations, is the same as for the Scripture. Therefore, it is not said that when our Lord Jesus Christ came and preached to the Jews, that these mere words, "I am the light of the world," or the like, had all this evidence in them or with them — for nothing he said of that kind may be separated from its circumstances. But supposing the testimonies given in the Scripture beforehand — as to his person, work, time, and manner of coming, combined with the evidence of the presence of God with him in the declaration he made of his doctrine and of being the Messiah — the Jews were bound to believe what he taught, and to believe that he was himself the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And many of them did so, upon his preaching only, Joh 4.42, 8.30.

In like manner, they were bound to believe the doctrine of John Baptist, and to submit to his institutions, even though he worked no miracle. And those who did not, rejected the counsel of God for their good, and perished in their unbelief. But although our Lord Jesus Christ worked no miracles to

prove that the Scripture then extant was the word of God — seeing that he worked miracles only among those by whom that was firmly believed [11] — the wisdom of God saw it necessary to confirm his personal ministry by them. And without a sense of the power and efficacy of the divine truth of the doctrine proposed, *miracles themselves* will be despised; so they were despised by some who were afterward converted by the preaching of the word, Acts 2.13. [12] Or they will produce only a *false* faith, or a ravished [13] assent upon an amazement; that will not abide, Acts 3.7-8, 8.13, 21. [14]

1. *Schoolmen*: Scholasticism is a method of critical thought taught in medieval universities in Europe c. 1100-1700. Practitioners were called "scholastics" or "schoolmen." They included Aquinas, Anselm, Abelard, Scotus, Bernard of Clairvaux, et al.

2. Bonaventure, "As for the objection that matters of belief are above reason, this is true [in the sense that they are] above reason as far as acquired knowledge is concerned, but not above reason elevated through faith, or the gift of science and understanding. For faith elevates us towards assent, while science and understanding elevates us towards understanding those things that we believe in." Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, *Prologue*, p. 80. — WHG

3. **1Cor 2:4** And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. **1Cor 14:24** But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. [25] And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

4. Unqualified foolishness. **Act 17:18** Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

5. **2Tim 3:14** But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, [15] and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to

make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

6. **Joh 4:42** Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

7. **Rom 10:14** How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? [15] And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" … [17] So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

8. **Luk 16:31** "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

9. That is, if a miracle is required to believe, and there is no miracle, then there is no requirement to believe.

10. For example, Esther is *traditionally* in the Canon, though it never mentions God or prayer. There are books mentioned in the Bible that we do not currently have in our possession, like the Book of Jasher (Josh 10.13) or Iddo the Seer (2Chr 9.29). It may be that one day we will discover a copy; and if it is Scripture, it too will be self-evident, and proven to be consistent with the rest.

11. **Mat 13:57** So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."

12. **Act 2:13** (*The Spirit's effusion at Pentecost*) Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

13. That is, spell-bound, emotionally overcome.

14. **Act 3:7** And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. [8] So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them-- walking, leaping, and praising God. [9] And all the people saw him walking and praising God. [10] Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. **Act 8:13** Then Simon [the Magician] himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. **Acts 8:21** (*Peter to Simon*)"You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

Appendix to Book VI — Part I.

This discourse will be closed with a summary representation of the *nature of* and *reason of* that faith with which we believe the Scripture is the word of God, and some *attestations* given to the substance of what has been delivered concerning it. As to the first part of the design, the things that follow are proposed:

I. As to the inquiry, on what grounds, or for what reason, we believe that the Scripture is the word of God, many things are *supposed* which are agreed upon by all hands. Their demonstration or proof does ***not*** belong to our present work. Such are —

1. The being of God and his self-subsistence, with all the essential properties of his nature.

2. Our relation to him and dependence on him as our creator, benefactor, preserver, judge, and rewarder, as to both temporal and eternal things. Therefore —

3. "Whatever may be known of God" by the light of nature — whatever is manifest in or from the works of creation and providence, and the necessary

actings of conscience — as to the being, rule, and authority of God, is assumed to be acknowledged in this inquiry.

4. That beyond the conduct and guidance of the light of nature, a supernatural revelation of His mind and will is necessary, that men may live to God, believe and put their trust in him according to their duty, in that obedience which he requires of them, so as to come to the enjoyment of him — especially in that condition which all mankind is in since the entrance of sin.

5. That all those to whom God has granted divine revelations immediately from himself, for their own use and the use of all other men to whom they were to be communicated, were infallibly assured that they came from God; and their minds were in no way imposed on in this.

6. That all these divine revelations, so far as they are in any way necessary to guide and instruct men in the true knowledge of God, and in that obedience which is acceptable to him, are now contained in the Scriptures, or those books of the Old and New Testament which are commonly received and accepted among all sorts of Christians.

These things, I say, are supposed for our present inquiry, and taken for granted, so that the reader is not to look for any direct proof of them in the preceding discourse. But on these suppositions, it is alleged and proved —

1. That all men to whom this Scripture is duly proposed, are bound to believe that these books of the Old and New Testament are the word of God — that is, they contain and exhibit an immediate, divine, supernatural revelation of his mind and will, so far as needful to live to him — and that nothing is contained in them except what is of the same divine origin.

2. The obligation of this duty to thus believe that the Scripture is the word of God, arises partly from the nature of the thing itself, and partly from the

special command of God. For because it is the revelation of the will of God — and without the knowledge of his will, and assent to it, we cannot live to God as we should, nor come to the enjoyment of him — it is necessary that we believe it to these ends; and God requires that we do so.

3. We cannot thus believe it in a way of duty, except upon sufficient evidence and prevalent testimony that it is so.

4. There are many cogent arguments, testimonies, and motives, to persuade, convince, and satisfy unprejudiced persons, that the Scripture is the word of God or a divine revelation. And these are sufficient in every way to close the mouths of opponents, proceeding on those principles of reason which are accepted and approved by mankind generally. And arguments of this nature may be taken from almost all considerations of the properties of God and his government of the world, of our relation to him, and of what belongs to our present peace and future happiness.

5. From the arguments and testimonies of this nature, a firm persuasion of mind that the Scripture is the word of God may be attained, defensible against all objections. And *that* is such that those who do not live in contradiction to their own light and reason, through the power of their lusts, cannot help but judge that it is their wisdom, duty, and interest to yield obedience to his will as revealed in this word.

6. Yet that persuasion of mind which may thus be attained, and which rests wholly upon these arguments and testimonies, is not entirely that faith with which we are obliged to believe that the Scripture is the word of God in a way of duty. For this faith is not to be merely human, however firm a persuasion it may be. Rather, it is to be divine and supernatural faith — of the same kind as that by which we believe the things themselves that are contained in the Scripture.

7. We cannot thus believe that the Scripture is the word of God, nor believe any divine truth contained in it, without the effectual illumination of our minds by the Holy Ghost. To exclude the consideration of his work in this, is to cast the whole inquiry outside the limits of Christian religion.

8. Yet this work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds — by which we are enabled to believe in a way of duty with supernatural and divine faith — is not the ground and reason *why* we believe, or the evidence *on which* we believe; nor is our faith resolved into this.

9. Because there are also various other acts of the Holy Spirit in and upon our minds, establishing this faith against temptations to the contrary, and further assuring us of the divine origin of the Scripture, or testifying it to us, none of them severally, nor all of them jointly, are the formal reason of our faith, nor the ground on which we believe. Yet they are such that, without the first work of divine illumination, we cannot believe at all in a due manner. And without his other consequent operations, we cannot steadfastly believe against temptations and oppositions. Therefore —

10. Only those whose minds are enlightened, and who are enabled to believe by the Holy Ghost, can rightly believe that the Scripture is the word of God, in a way of duty.

11. Those who do not believe are of two sorts: they are either those who oppose and dispute the word as a cunningly-devised fable, or those who are willing, without prejudice, to attend to its consideration. The former sort may be resisted, opposed, and rebuked by external arguments, and those moral considerations which vehemently persuade of the divine origin of the Scripture. And from the same principles, their mouths may be stopped as to their cavils and exceptions against it. The other sort is to be led to believing,

by the ministry of the church in the dispensation of the word itself; this is the ordinance of God to that purpose. But —

12. Neither sort ever comes to truly believe, either by being induced to it merely by force of moral arguments, or upon the authority of that church by whose ministry the Scripture is proposed to them to be believed. Therefore —

13. The formal reason of divine and supernatural faith, by which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God in the way of duty, and as it is required of us, is the authority and veracity of God alone, evidencing themselves to our minds and consciences in and by the Scripture itself. In this consists that divine testimony of the Holy Ghost which, as it is a testimony, gives our assent to the Scriptures, the general nature of faith; and as it is a *divine* testimony, it gives our assent the special nature of divine and supernatural faith.

14. This divine testimony given to the divine origin of the Scripture, in and by itself, and into which our faith is ultimately resolved, is evidenced and made known by the characteristics of the infinite perfections of the divine nature that are in it and upon it. And so too by the authority, power, and efficacy it has over and upon the souls and consciences of men, and the satisfactory excellence of the truths contained in it, and with which it is accompanied.

15. Thus, although there are many cogent external arguments by which a moral, steadfast persuasion of the divine authority of the Scriptures may be attained; and although it is the principal duty of the true church in all ages to give testimony to this — which it has done successively at all times since first it was entrusted with it; and although there are many other means by which we are induced, persuaded, and enabled to believe it; yet it is for its

own sake only, efficaciously manifesting itself to be the word of God, or upon the divine testimony that is given in it and by it, that we believe it to be so, with divine and supernatural faith.

Corollary. Those who either deny the necessity of an internal subjective work of the Holy Ghost enabling us to believe, or the objective testimony of the Holy Spirit given to the Scripture in and by itself, or who deny their joint concurrence in and to our believing, deny all faith that is properly divine and supernatural.

II. This being the substance of what is declared and pleaded for in the preceding treatise, to prevent the obloquy [1] of some and confirm the judgment of others, I will add the suffrage [2] of ancient and modern writers given to its principal parts, on which all other things asserted in it depend.

Clemens Alexandrinus [3] discourses at large to this purpose, —

"We have the Lord himself for the principle or beginning of doctrine; by the prophets, the gospel, and blessed apostles, in various manners and by diverse degrees, He goes before us, or leads us to knowledge." [4]

This is what we lay down as the reason and ground of faith — namely, the authority of the Lord himself instructing us by the Scriptures. So he adds: —

"And if anyone supposes that he needs any other principle, the principle will not be kept."

That is, if we need any other principle into which to resolve our faith, the word of God is no longer a principle to us.

"But the one who is faithful from himself is worthy to be believed in his sovereign writing and voice. As it appears, this is administered by the Lord for the benefit of men. And certainly we use it as a rule of judging to discover things. But whatever is judged is not credible, nor is it to be

believed until it *is* judged; and what stands in need of being judged, is not a principle." [5]

The intention of his words is that God, who alone is to be believed for himself, has given us his word as the rule by which we are to judge all things. And this word is to be so believed as not to be subject to any other judgment; because if it is, then it cannot be either a principle or a rule. And so he proceeds: —

"Therefore, it is fitting that, embracing by faith the most sufficient, indemonstrable principle, and taking the demonstrations of the principle from the principle itself, we are instructed by the voice of the Lord himself, unto the acknowledgement of the truth." [6]

In few words he declares the substance of what we have pleaded for. We maintain no more in this cause than what Clement asserts here — namely, that we believe the Scripture for itself, as that which needs no antecedent or external demonstration, but all the evidence and demonstration of its divine origin is to be taken from itself alone. He still further confirms this: —

"For we would not attend or give credit simply to the definitions of men, seeing that we also have a right to define in contradiction to them. And seeing that it is not sufficient merely to say or assert what appears to be truth, but to also instill a belief of what is spoken, we do not expect the testimony of men, but confirm what is inquired about with the voice of the Lord. This is fuller and firmer than any demonstration — Rather, it is indeed the *only* demonstration. Thus, taking our demonstrations of the Scripture out of the Scripture itself, we are as assured by faith, as we are by demonstration." [7]

And in other places, such as *Strom. 4*, he plainly affirms that the way of Christians was to prove the Scripture by itself, and to prove all other things

by the Scripture.

Basilius [8] speaks to the same purpose on Psa 105: — "Faith, which draws the soul to assent above all methods of reasonings; faith, which is not the effect of geometrical demonstrations, but of the efficacy of the Spirit." [9] Basil is asserting the nature, cause, and efficacy of that faith by which we believe that the Scripture is the word of God.

Nemsius, [10] De Homin., cap. ii. — "The doctrine of the divine oracles has its credibility from itself, because of its divine inspiration." [11]

The words of Austin, though taken notice of by all, may yet be reported here again.

"I would hear, I would understand how You made the heaven and the earth. Moses wrote this; he wrote it, and has gone from here to You, for he is not now before me. For if he were, I would hold him, and ask him, and beseech him, for Your sake, that he would open these things to me; and I would apply the ears of my body to the sounds breaking forth from his mouth.

But if he were to use the Hebrew language, he would affect my sense in vain, for he would not touch my mind at all. If he spoke Latin, I would know what he said, but how would I know that he spoke the truth? And if I knew this also, would I know it *by him?* Within me, in the habitation of my own thoughts, not in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, nor any barbarous language, without the organs of the mouth or tongue, without the noise of syllables, Truth would say, 'He speaks the truth.' And being immediately assured or certain of it, I would say to that servant of yours, 'You speak truth.' Therefore, because I cannot ask him, I ask *you*, O Truth, the truth which, being filled with it, he spoke the things that are true. O my God, I ask of

you, pardon my sins; and You who gave these things to your servant to speak, give me to understand them." [12]

What is most remarkable in these words is that Austin plainly affirms that faith would not ensue on the declaration of the prophets themselves if they were present with us, unless there is an internal work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds to enable us, and persuade our minds of it. And, indeed, he seems to place all assurance of the truth of divine revelations in the inward assurance which God gives us of them by his Spirit; which we have considered before.

The Second Arausican Council [13] gives full testimony to the necessity of the internal grace of the Spirit that we may believe: Canon 7. [14]

To descend to later times, in which these things have been greatly disputed, the truth nonetheless beamed such light into the eyes of many, that it forced an acknowledgement from them, once they examined themselves about it. The words of Baptista Mantuanus [15] are remarkable,

"I have often thought with myself why the Scripture itself is so persuasive, from where does it so powerfully influence the minds of its hearers, that it inclines or leads them not only to have an opinion, but to surely believe. This is not to be imputed to the evidence of reasons, which it does not produce; nor to the industry of art, with words that are smooth and fit to persuade, which it does not use. See then if *this* is not the cause of it: that we are persuaded that it comes from the first Truth or Verity. But from *where* are we so persuaded, if not from itself alone — as if its own authority effectively draws us to believe it? But from where, I pray, does it have this authority? We did not see God preaching, writing, or teaching it. Yet, as if we *had* seen Him, we believe and firmly hold that the things which we read, proceeded from the Holy Ghost.

It may be that *this* is the reason why we so firmly adhere to it: that truth is more solid in it, though not more clear, than in other writings. For all truth has a persuasive power — the greater the truth, the greater the power. And that truth which is greatest, has the greatest efficacy of all. But why, then, do not *all* believe the gospel? *Answer:* Because all are not drawn by God. But what need is there of any long disputation? We therefore firmly believe the Scriptures, because we have received a divine inspiration assuring us." [16]

And in the preceding discourse it has been declared in what sense this is allowed. I will close the whole with the testimony of those by whom the truth which we assert is most vehemently opposed when it rises in opposition to a special interest of their own.

There are two things which are principally objected to in the doctrine of Protestants concerning our belief of the Scripture:

The *first* is with respect to the Holy Spirit as the efficient cause of faith. Because Protestants teach that no man can believe that the Scripture is the word of God in a due manner, and according to his duty, without the real internal aid and operation of the Holy Ghost, however it is proposed to him, and with whatever arguments the truth of its divine origin is confirmed, this is charged against them as an error and a crime.

And *secondly*, because Protestants also affirm that there is an inward testimony or witness of the Holy Spirit, by which He assures and confirms the minds of men in the faith of the Scriptures, with an efficacy exceeding all the persuasive evidence of outward arguments and motives, they are also maligned for this by some.

And yet those of the Roman church who are looked to as the most averse to that resolution of faith which most Protestants acquiesce in, expressly

maintain *both* these assertions.

The design of Stapleton [17] is to prove with various arguments, "that it is impossible to produce any act of faith, or to believe with faith, rightly so called, without special grace, and the divine infusion of the gift of faith." [18]

And Bellarmine [19] speaks to the same purpose: —

"The arguments which render the articles of our faith credible are not those which produce an undoubted faith, unless the mind is divinely assisted." [20]

Melchior Canus, [21] expressly argues to this purpose:

"This is to be firmly held: that human authority and all the motives mentioned before, or any other which may be used by the one who proposes the object of faith that is to be believed, are not sufficient causes of believing as we are obliged to believe. But there is necessary, moreover, an internal efficient cause moving us to believe, which is the special help or aid of God." [22]

And a little after, he says still more plainly,

"For this reason, all external human persuasions or arguments are insufficient causes of faith, however the things of faith may be sufficiently proposed by men. There is, moreover, an internal cause necessary, that is, a certain divine light given to us by the grace of God, inciting us to believe, or certain internal eyes to see." [23]

Indeed, all other learned men of the same profession speak to the same purpose.

They no less comply with the other assertion also. Stapleton says,

"The secret testimony of the Spirit is altogether necessary, that a man may believe the testimony and judgment of the church about the Scriptures." [24]

And the words of Gregory de Valentia [25] are remarkable. Let any man compare his words with those of Calvin — which, as I remember, I cited before [26] —and he will know where their sense was taken from:

"Because we have up to now pleaded arguments for the authority of Christian doctrine, which even by themselves ought to suffice for prudent persons to induce their minds to belief, yet I do not know whether there is not an argument greater than them all — namely, that those who are truly Christians, find or feel by experience their minds so affected in this matter of faith, that they are moved (and obliged) to firmly believe. This is not for any argument that we have used, nor for any argument of a like sort that can be discovered by reason, but for something else which persuades our minds in another manner, and far more effectively than any arguments whatever." [27]

And to show what he means by this internal argument and persuasion, he affirms elsewhere that,

"It is God himself who, by the voice of his revelation, and by a certain internal instinct and impulse, witnesses to the minds of men, the truth of Christian doctrine or of the holy Scripture." [28]

I have produced these few testimonies among the many that might be urged to the same purpose — not to confirm the truth which we have pleaded for, which stands on far surer foundations, but only to obviate prejudices in the minds of some who, not being very conversant in things of this nature, are ready to charge [29] what has been singularly delivered to this purpose.

1. *Obloquy*: a false accusation of an offense or a malicious misrepresentation of someone's words or actions.
2. *Suffrage*: testimony.
3. Clement of Alexandria (150-215).
4. *Strom. cap. 16*,"Εχομεν γὰρ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς διδασκαλίας τὸν Κύριον, διά τε τῶν προφητῶν, διά τε τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, καὶ διὰ τῶν μακαρίων ἀποστόλων, πολυτρόπως καὶ πολυμερῶς ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος ἡγούμενον τῆς γνώσεως.
5. Τὴν ἀρχὴν δ' εἴτις ἑτέρου δεῖσθαι ὑπολάβοι, οὐκέτ' ἄν ὄντως ἀρχὴ φυλαχθείη. Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐξ ἐαυτοῦ πιστὸς, τῇ κυριακῇ γραφῇ τε καὶ φωνῇ ἀξιόπιστος εἰκότως ἄν διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐεργεσίαν ἐνεργουμένη· ἀμέλει πρὸς τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων εὕρεσιν, αὐτῇ χρώμεθα κριτηρίῳ· τὸ κρινόμενον δὲ πᾶν, ἔτι ἄπιστον πρὶν κριθῆναι· ὥστ' ὀυδ' ἀρχὴ τὸ κρίσεως δεμενον.
6. Εἰκότως τοίνυν πίστει περιλαβόντες ἀναπόδεικτον τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκ περιουσίας, καὶ τὰς ἀποδείξεις παρ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρχῆς περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς λαβόντες, φωνῇ Κυρίου παιδευόμεθα πρὸς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας.
7. Οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς ἀποφαινομένοις ἀνθρώποις προσέχοιμεν, οἷς καὶ ἀνταποφαίνεσθαι ἐπ' ἴσης ἔξεστιν. Εἰ δ' οὐκ ἀρκεῖ μόνον ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν τὸ δόξαν, ἀλλὰ πιστώσασθαι δεῖ τὸ λεχθὲν, οὐ τὴν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀναμένομεν μαρτυρίαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ τοῦ Κυρίου φωνῇ πιστούμεθα τὸ ζητούμενον."Η πασῶν ἀποδείξεων ἐχεγγυωτέρα, μᾶλλον δ', ἥ μόνη ἀπόδειξις οὖσα τυγχάνει. Οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀπ' αὐτῶν περὶ αὐτῶν τῶν γραφῶν τελείως ἀποδεικνύντες, ἐκ πίστεως τειθόμεθα ἀποδεικτικῶ.

8. Basil of Caesarea (330-379), also Basil the Great; brothers: Gregory of Nyssa, Macrina the Younger, and Theosebia.
9. Πίστις, ἡ ὑπὲρ τὰς λογικὰς μεθόδους τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς συγκατάθεσιν ἕλκουσα. Πίστις, οὐκ ἡ γεωμετρικαῖς ἀνάγκαις, ἀλλ' ἡ ταῖς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐνεργείαις ἐγγινομένη.
10. Nemesius of Emesa (4th century); authored "On the Nature of Man," the first compendium of Christian anthropology.
11. Ἡ τῶν θείων λογίων διδασκαλία, τὸ πιστὸν ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἔχουσα διὰ τὸ θεόπνευστον εἶναι·.
12. Augustine, *Confessions*, lib. xi. cap. 3.
13. That is, the Second Council of Orange, 529 A.D.
14. **CANON 7.** If anyone affirms that we can form any right opinion or make any right choice which relates to the salvation of eternal life, as is expedient for us, or that we can be saved, that is, assent to the preaching of the gospel through our natural powers without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who makes all men gladly assent to and believe in the truth, he is led astray by a heretical spirit, and does not understand the voice of God who says in the Gospel, "For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), and the word of the Apostle, "Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).
15. Also known as Johannes Baptista **Spagnolo** (1447-1516); an Italian Carmelite reformer.
16. *De Patient., lib. iii. cap. 2.* "Sæpe mecum cogitavi unde tam suadibilis sit ipsa Scriptura, unde tam potenter influat in animos auditorum, unde tantum habeat energiæ, ut non ad opinandum tantum, sed ad olide credendum omnes inflectat? Non est hoc imputandum rationum evidentiæ,

quas non adducit; non artis industriæ aut verbis suavibus ad persuadendum accommodatis, quibus non utitur. Sed vide an id in causa sit, quod persuasi sumus eam a prima veritate fluxisse? Sed unde sumus ita persuasi nisi ab ipsa? quasi ad ei credendum nos sui ipsius contrahat authoritas. Sed unde oro hanc anthoritatem sibi vendicavit? Neque enim vidimus nos Deum concionantem, scribentem, docentem; tamen, ac si vidissemus, credimus et tenemus a Spiritu Sancto fluxisse quæ legimus. Forsan fuerit hæc ratio firmiter adhærendi, quod in ea veritas sit solidior, quamvis non clarior; habet enim omnis veritas vim inclinativam, et major majorem, et maxima maximam. Sed cur ergo non omnes credunt evangelio? *Respond.* Quod non omnes trahuntur a Deo. Sed longa opus est disputatione? Firmiter sacris Scripturis ideo credimus quod divinam inspirationem intus accepimus;”

17. Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598) – English Catholic theologian who helped found the English College in Douay, France, 1561. On the accession of Elizabeth I (1558), he left England, rather than conform to Protestantism. Later returning to England, he was summoned by the Anglican bishop (1563) to repudiate the pope's authority. Stapleton refused.

18. *De Principiis Fidei, controver. 4, lib. viii. cap. 1* "impossibile esse sine speciali gratia, ac done fidei divinitùs infuso, actum veræ fidei producere, aut ex veri nominis fide credere."

19. Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) Jesuit and Roman Catholic Cardinal; an important figure in the Counter-Reformation.

20. *De Grat. et Lib. Arbit., lib. 6 cap. 3* “Argumenta quæ articulos fidei nostræ credibiles faciunt non talia sunt ut fidem omnino indubitatam reddant, nisi mens divinitùs adjuvetur.”

21. Or Melchor Cano – Spanish Dominican bishop and Scholastic theologian (1509-1560).

22. *Loc. Theol., lib. ii. cap. 8,* “Id statuendum est, authoritatem humanam et incitamenta omnia illa prædicta, sive alia quæcunque adhibita ab eo qui proponit fidem, non esse sufficientes causas ad credendum ut credere tenemur; sed præterea opus esse interiori causa efficiente, id est, Dei speciali auxilio moventis ad credendum;”
23. “Externæ igitur omnes et humanæ persuasiones non sunt satis ad credendum, quantumcunque ab hominibus competenter ea quæ sunt fidei proponantur; sed necessaria est insuper causa interior, hoc est, divinum quoddam lumen, incitans ad credendum, et oculi quidam interiores Dei beneficio ad videndum dati;”
24. “Arcanum divini Spiritus testimonium prorsus necessarium est, ut quis ecclesiæ testimonio ac judicio circa Scripturarum approbationem credat.”
25. Gregory de Valentia (1550-1603) – Professor of the University of Ingolstadt (Spain).
26. Institut. lib. i, cap. 7, sect. 5, cited at the end of Book VI, chap. 4. ().
27. *Tom. iii. in Thom., disp. 7, qu. 1, punc. 4, sect. 2.* “Cum hactenus ejusmodi argumenta pro authoritate Christianæ doctrinæ fecerimus, quæ per seipsa satis prudentibns esse debeant, ut animum inducant velle credere; tamen nescio an non sit argumentum iis omnibus majus, quod qui vere Christiani sunt, ita se animo affectos esse, quod ad fidem attinet, sentiunt, ut præcipue quidem propter nullum argumentum, quod vel hactenus fecimus vel ratione similiter excogitari possit, sed propter aliud nescio quid, quod alio quodam modo et longe fortius quam ulla argumenta persuadet, ut ad firmiter credendum [trahi] se intelligant,”
28. “Deus ipse imprimis est, qui, Christianam doctrinam atque adeo Scripturam sacram veram esse, voce revelationis suæ et interno quodam instinctu et impulsu, humanis mentibus contestatur;”

29. *Charge*: that is, with wrongdoing or misbehavior; to attack.

Book VI. Part II. Understanding the Mind of God.

Monergism Books

Book VI. Part II. Understanding the Mind of God.

ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ

Sunesis Pneumatikh

OR,

THE CAUSES, WAYS, AND MEANS OF UNDERSTANDING THE MIND OF GOD AS REVEALED IN HIS WORD, WITH ASSURANCE IN THIS;

AND

A DECLARATION OF THE PERSPICUITY OF THE SCRIPTURES,

WITH THE EXTERNAL MEANS OF THEIR INTERPRETATION.

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. — Psa 119.18.

Give me understanding, and I will live. — Verse 144.

London: **1678**.

Imprimatur,

Guil. Sill., May 13, 1678.

Prefatory note.

The following work is the latter part of our author's treatise on the operations of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the minds of believers. And it relates to the method by which we are to understand and interpret Scripture rightly, just as the former part of it was occupied exclusively with a discussion of the evidence or grounds on which we receive it as divine.

In the preceding treatise, on "*The Reason of Faith*," while defending the objective authority of the Word, in opposition to the principle of an "inward light," Owen asserted and proved the necessity of spiritual influence for the due reception of the Word in its divine authority. His argument in the present treatise has "special respect to the Church of Rome." And on the principle that every man has a right to interpret Scripture, he opens with a denial of the claim of that church to be the only interpreter of Scripture. The Quaker and the Romanist agree in holding the subordination of Scripture to another authority in matters of faith — the former finding this authority in his inward light, the latter vesting it in the church. Our author, in common with the general body of Protestants, asserts the sufficiency of revelation in

itself as a rule of faith and duty, provided it is read and understood in the enjoyment of the enlightening influence of the Spirit, and in the use of certain divinely appointed means.

This treatise, if not among the best known, is among the most useful of our author's works. The subject is of confessed importance, and he handles it with all his characteristic sagacity. Singularly coherent, and comprehensive in its details, less prolix [1] than most of his works, and free from irrelevant digressions, to this day it is not superseded by any similar treatise on the same subject; and it forms an excellent manual for all who are engaged in sacred studies as a profession. Dr. Pye Smith, in his "*Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*," quotes from it copiously, in illustration of the spirit with which the study of the divine Word should be prosecuted. Nor has Owen by any means exhausted the noble and weighty sentiments which occur in this work, expressive of humble reverence for its supreme authority. Owen in himself exemplifies the benefit that is sure to accrue from the prostration or every claim and gift before the throne of revealed truth. Few have surpassed him in "the full assurance of understanding."

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1. *Prolix*: Tediously prolonged, wordy.

Analysis.

The presumptuous claim of the Romish Church to the infallible interpretation of the Word is denied, and the right of private judgement in the interpretation of it is asserted. The question considered, is declared to relate to the method by which we attain a right perception of the mind of God in Scripture. And this method is described as twofold:

I. Through a principal efficient cause; and,

II. Through auxiliary means, internal and external, appointed by God, (ch. 1).

I. The Holy, Spirit is represented as the efficient cause, and an inquiry follows:

1. Into the *evidence* of the work of the Spirit in the communication of spiritual understanding; — various testimonies from Scripture are adduced, involving a minute discussion of Psa 119.18; 2Cor 3.13-18; Isa 25.7; Luk 24.44-45; Eph 1.17-19; Hos 14.9, (ch. 2); Joh 16.13; 1Joh 2.20, 27; Eph 4.14; Job 36.22; Joh 6.45, (ch. 3); and

2. Into *the special nature* of the Spirit's work in enlightening us into a knowledge of the mind of God in Scripture. Its nature is first considered by a reference to several scriptural expressions descriptive of it, such as "opening the eyes," "translating out of darkness into light," "giving understanding," "teaching," and "shining into our hearts," (ch. 4).

As preparatory to what follows in explanation of the Spirit's work in enlightening the mind, a digression is introduced on the causes of spiritual ignorance, which are classified into three divisions: the natural vanity of the depraved mind; the working of corrupt affections; and the deceitful influence of Satan. He explains the way in which the Spirit operates *directly on our minds* for the removal of all those causes of spiritual ignorance, by communicating spiritual light, purging from corrupt affections, and implanting spiritual habits and principles (ch. 5).

The Spirit's work for producing the same effect *by means of Scripture itself*, next comes under review. And under this head, three points are considered in regard to it,

(1.) The arrangement,

(2.) The subject-matter of Scripture, and

(3.) Difficulties in Scripture.

(1.) On the first of these points, advantages are exhibited as resulting from the lack of a formal system in revelation; the ministry of the gospel is felt to be of value; faith and obedience are brought into special exercise; and a search into the whole of Scripture is rendered necessary

(2.) the subject-matter of revelation is proved to contain all things requisite for faith and practice.

(3.) The difficulties in Scripture include first, things "hard to understand;" and secondly, things "hard to interpret." Rules for the management of these

difficulties are supplied, (ch. 6).

II. As to the means for understanding Scripture, two kinds are specified:

1. Those which are general and necessary, such as the reading of Scripture; and,

2. Those which are expedient and conducive to improving our understanding of it.

And the latter are threefold:

(1.) *Spiritual* means such as prayer, susceptibility to gracious impressions, practical obedience, desire for progress in knowledge, and attention to the ordinances of worship, (ch. 7);

(2.) *Disciplinary*, such as skill in the original languages of Scripture; acquaintance with history, geography, and chronology, and expertness in reasoning, (ch. 8); and,

(3.) *Ecclesiastical*, under which is estimated the deference due to catholic tradition, the consent of the fathers, and pious authorship, (ch. 9). — Ed.

UNDERSTANDING THE MIND OF GOD

Preface.

I will in a few words give the reader an account of the occasion and design of the small ensuing discourse. Some while ago I published a treatise about the "Reason of Faith, or the Grounds on which we Believe the Scripture is the Word of God," with that faith which is our duty, and is pre-required for all other acceptable obedience. But although this is the first fundamental principle of supernatural religion, it is not sufficient for any of its ends (that we believe the Scripture is divine revelation), unless we understand the mind and will of God revealed in it. At least, the knowledge and understanding of those things in which our present duty and future state of blessedness or misery are immediately concerned, are no less indispensably necessary to us than the belief that the Scripture is the word of God. It is the design of the ensuing discourse, to declare the ways and means by which we may assuredly attain that understanding, just as those ways and means by which we come to infallibly believe the Scripture with divine and supernatural faith, are the subject of the former. My principal scope in both these has been to manifest that such is the abundant goodness,

wisdom, and grace of God, in granting us the inestimable benefit of his word, that no persons whatever will or can come short of the advantage intended by it, except through their own sinful negligence and ingratitude — the highest crimes in things of a spiritual and eternal concern.

For he has given such convincing evidences of the proceeding or emanation of the Scripture from himself, by the divine inspiration of its penmen — and he has so plainly declared his mind and will in this, as to the faith and obedience which he requires of any or all sorts of persons in their various circumstances — that everyone who takes care of his own present and eternal welfare,

- in the due use of the means appointed by Him, and
- in the discharge of the duties prescribed by Him to that end, and
- with a due dependence on the aid and assistance which He will not withhold from anyone who diligently seeks Him,

that he may and will infallibly attain such a measure of the knowledge of God's mind and will, with full assurance in this, that it will be sufficient to guide him to eternal blessedness. The same measure of divine knowledge is not required in all and every one in order to live to God and come to the enjoyment of him. The dispensation of God towards mankind — in nature, providence, and grace — is an invincible spring of such variety among them, that it will not allow a prescription of the same measure of knowledge to all; and this is consistent with divine wisdom and goodness. And if such a thing existed, it would bring confusion into all the order of things and persons; this too is of divine constitution. Nor is it pretended that any one man may or can have, in the use of any means whatever, a full comprehension of all divine revelations in this life, nor perhaps of any one of them — or that all men, in the use of the same means prescribed to them,

will have the same conceptions of all the things that are revealed. The Scripture was given for the use of the whole church, in all ages, states, and conditions, with respect to that inconceivable variety of circumstances into which all sorts of causes distribute the whole multitude of believers.

Thus, the wisdom of God in this has suited itself to the instruction of every individual believer, up to the moment of his entrance into eternity. That any one of them, that any society of them, should have a perfect comprehension of the entire revelation of God, or a perfect understanding of the whole Scripture and every part of it, with all that is contained in it, was never required of them in a way of duty; nor was it ever intended for them as a privilege. For besides, he has replenished the Scripture with unfathomable stores, unsearchable treasures of divine mysteries, in which we cannot perfectly discover the Almighty. And he has provided another state [1] for the comprehension by sight, of that which is the object of adoration and admiration in believing — such knowledge is not necessary for anyone to lead the life of faith, and discharge its duties in all holy obedience to God.

Indeed, such knowledge and comprehension would be inconsistent with that state and condition in which we are to walk with God, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, and during the continuance of this state. But the substance of what we plead for, is that such is the wisdom, goodness, and love of God towards mankind, in the grant that he has made to them of the revelation of himself in the Scripture, of his mind and will, that no one person does or can fail to attain all that understanding, in it and of it, which is in any way necessary for his guidance to live to God in his circumstances and relationships, so as to come to the blessed enjoyment of him. That is, except by the sinful neglect of the means and duties prescribed by God for

attaining that understanding, and by a lack of due dependence on those spiritual aids and assistances which God has prepared for that end.

It is the design of this and the other forementioned discourse, to declare by what ways and means God has thus provided for the assurance and security of all men, in things of their eternal concern; and what are those acts of his wisdom, power, and grace, which he exerts for that end — namely, that they may both *believe* that the Scripture is his word, and *understand* his mind revealed in it. Both of these are required of them in a way of duty, so that in both they may be accepted by him. And both are principally intended for the use of the ordinary sort of Christians, who know it is their concern to be established in the truth of those things in which they have been instructed. For they are frequently attacked with these questions:

"How do you know that the Scriptures are the word of God? And what assurance do you have that you understand anything contained in them, seeing that all sorts of persons are divided about their sense and meaning, and you do not pretend to have any immediate inspiration to give you assurance?"

Upon these ensnaring inquiries, if they are thrown under any doubts or perplexities in their minds, as it often happens among those who have not diligently weighed the principles of their own profession, the next insinuation is that they ought to take themselves either to some other present guide — such as their own light and reason — or else completely resign themselves and the conduct of their souls to the pretended authority and guidance of other men.

It is designed in these small treatises, to give assurance and security to their minds, that they are not, nor can they be, deceived by believing that the Scriptures are the word of God, and that they have the understanding of

His mind and will in them, so far as their present obedience and eternal happiness are concerned. And to this end, they need not be beholden to anyone, nor depend on anyone except God himself, in the use of known and obvious means or duties.

And upon the principles evinced and confirmed in these treatises, I have proposed a further inquiry: — namely, what conduct everyone who takes care for his own salvation should resort to, in these times of great contests about the assurance of faith and its causes, so that he may not be deceived nor miscarry in the end. And this is designed with special respect to the church of Rome, which vehemently pretends to sole infallible conduct in these things. But probably the near approach of the daily-expected and earnestly-desired hour of my discharge from all further service in this world, will prevent the accomplishment of that intention.[2] I yet live and rejoice in the continual prospect of this. Among other unspeakable advantages, this has already left me unconcerned in those oppositions in which the passions or interests of men engage them. It has a very near alliance to, and it is scarcely distinguishable from, that which the grave will afford.

I have but one thing more to acquaint the reader with, which I will close this preface with. And it is the same as that which the preface to the former discourse concluded with. This also belongs to the second part of my discourse concerning the dispensation and operations of the Holy Spirit. The first volume on that subject (published some years ago) — having found good acceptance among those who are godly and learned, both at home and abroad — I have desired to give what still remains for the complete accomplishment of what I designed there, in this way of lesser

discourses. They may have their use before the whole is finished, whether it ever be finished or not.

ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ.

Sunesis Pneumatikh [3]

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1. Namely, the *eternal* state. Perfect knowledge is not necessary or possible in the preceding state of *grace*.

2. In 1679, Dr. Owen published a small treatise answering this description, under the title of "*The Church of Rome no Safe Guide*." It forms a part of his controversial writings. See vol. xiv. — Ed.

3. **Col 1:9** For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and *spiritual understanding* [*sunesis pneumatikh,* NT:4907,4152];

Chapter I. Usurpation by Rome of the Interpretation of Scripture

Usurpation of the church of Rome with reference to the interpretation of the Scripture, or the right understanding of the mind of God in this — The right and ability of all believers as to their own duty in this is asserted — Importance of the truth proposed — The main question stated — The principal efficient cause of the understanding which believers have in the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, the Spirit of God himself — General assertions to be proved — Declared in various particulars — Inferences from them.

Our belief that the Scriptures are the word of God, or a divine revelation, and our understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in them, are the *two springs* of all our interest in Christian religion. From them are derived all those streams of light and truth by which our souls are watered, refreshed, and made fruitful to God. It therefore concerns us greatly to look well to those *springs*, that they are neither stopped nor defiled, and so rendered useless to us. Though a man may have pleasant streams running by his habitation, and watering his inheritance, if their springs are in the

power of others who can either divert their course or poison their waters, then he must always depend on their pleasure for the benefit of them.

Thus has it fallen out in the world in this matter — so the *church of Rome* has endeavored to deal with all Christians. Their main endeavor is to seize those *springs* of religion into their own power. The Scripture itself, they tell us, cannot be believed to be the word of God with divine faith except on the proposal and testimony of their church; thereby one spring is secured. And when it is believed to be so, it *ought* not to be interpreted, it *cannot* be understood, except according to the mind, judgment, and exposition of that same church; which in like manner secures the other spring. Having possessed these *springs* of Christian religion from of old, they have dealt with them as might be expected from unjust invaders of other men's rights, and bad faith possessors. [1]

So when the Philistines contended for the wells which Abraham and Isaac had dug, when they had gotten possession of them they stopped them up; and when the scribes and Pharisees had gotten the *key of knowledge*, they would neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor allow those who would, to do so, as our Savior tells us. [2] For one of these *springs*, which is the *letter* of the Scripture itself, when it ought to have poured out like the *waters of the sanctuary* to refresh the church and make it fruitful unto God, they partly stopped it up and partly diverted its course, by shutting it up in an *unknown tongue* and barring the people using it. And in the exercise of their pretended right to the other *spring*, or the *sole interpretation* of the Scripture, they have poisoned the streams with all manner of errors and delusions, so that they became not only useless, but noxious and pernicious to the souls of men. For under this pretense — namely, that their church has the *sole power to interpret the Scriptures*, and

cannot err in this — they have obtruded all their errors, with all their abominations in worship and practice, on the minds and consciences of men.

In the former discourse on this subject, I have taken the first of these *springs* out of their hand, so far as we ourselves are concerned in this — or I have vindicated the just right of all Christians to this spring, and have given them possession of it. I did this by declaring the true grounds and reasons on which we do (and on which anyone can) truly *believe that the Scripture is the word of God* with divine and supernatural faith. For besides other advantages with which the knowledge of that truth is accompanied, it dispossesses the Romanists of their claim to this fountain of religion by evidencing that we do and ought to thus believe the divine origin of the Scripture, without any regard to the testimony or authority of their church.

What now lies before us is the vindication of the right of all believers to the *other spring also*, or a right understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture, suitable to the duty that God requires of them in their several capacities and conditions.

What will be spoken to afterward, among other things, is:

(1) What is necessary to *interpret difficult places* and passages in the Scripture; and

(2) What measure of understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in it, is required of persons in their various conditions — as they are teachers of others, or as they are among the number of those who are to be taught.

My principal design is to manifest that *every believer may, in the due use of the means appointed by God for that end, attain such a full assurance of understanding in the truth, or in all that knowledge of the mind and will of*

God revealed in the Scripture, which is sufficient to direct him in the life of God, to deliver him from the dangers of ignorance, darkness, and error, and to conduct him to blessedness.

Therefore, as it is to believing the Scripture itself, so it is as to understanding, knowing, and having faith in the things contained in it: we do not depend on the *authoritative interpretation* of any church or person whatsoever. Although ordinary believers are obliged to make diligent and conscientious use of the *ministry of the church*, among other things, as a means appointed by God to lead, guide, and instruct them in the knowledge of his mind and will revealed in the Scripture — which is the principal end of that ordinance — yet their understanding of the truth, their apprehension of it and faith in it, is not to rest on or to be resolved into the authority of those who are not appointed by God to be *lords of their faith*, but *helpers of their joy*. And on that depends all our interest in that great promise, that we will *"all be taught by God*." Joh 6.45 For we are not so taught, unless we learn *from* Him and *by* Him, the things which he has revealed in his word.

There is no truth of greater importance for men to be established in. For unless they have *a full assurance of understanding in themselves*, unless they hold their persuasion of the sense of Scripture revelations from God alone — if their spiritual judgment of truth and falsehood depend on the authority of men — they will never be able to undergo any suffering for the truth, or perform any duty to God, in a right manner. The truths of the gospel and the ways of religious worship — for which any believer may be called to suffer in this world — are such that there is great difference and controversy among men about *the sense* and *revelation of them in the Scripture*. And if there is not an assured, yes, an infallible way and means of communicating to all believers a knowledge of the mind and will of God in

the Scripture, concerning those things that are so controverted, and the grounds of which are fixed in their own minds, then they cannot help but wholly depend on the expositions and *interpretations* of other men. Whoever they may be, they cannot *suffer* for them either cheerfully or honorably so as to give glory to God, nor can they obtain any solid peace and comfort in their own souls. For if a man under his *sufferings* for his profession can give himself no other account than this — that what he suffers for is the truth of God revealed in the Scripture, because such and such a person whom he venerates or esteems, so affirms and has so instructed him; or because it is the doctrine of this or that church which has prescribed it to him, whether the *papal* or *reformed church* — then he will have little joy from his suffering in the end. Yes, there is that which is still worse in this matter, as things are stated at this day in the world. Truth and error are promiscuously *persecuted* according to the judgment, interest, and inclinations of those who are in power.

Indeed, sometimes both truth and error are persecuted in the same place and at the same time, upon errors differing from both. Dissent has grown almost all that is criminal in Christian religion, all over the world. But in this state of things, unless we grant men an immediate *understanding of their own* in the mind and will of God — indeed, a *full assurance* in this — there will be nothing by which a man who suffers for the most important truths of the gospel, can distinguish in his own soul and conscience from those who suffer in giving testimony to the most pernicious errors. For all the outward means of confidence which he has, they may have also.

It therefore behoves all those who may possibly be called to *suffer for the truth* in any season, or on any occasion, to assure their minds in this fundamental truth: that they may have in themselves a certain undeceiving

understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture, independent of the authority of any church or persons whatsoever — the use of whose ministry in this, we yet freely and fully allow.

Nor, indeed, without a supposition of this, can any man perform any duty to God in an acceptable manner, so that his obedience may be the *obedience of faith*;[Rom 16.26] nor can he die in peace on good grounds, since the *just will live by his own faith alone*.[Hab 2.4]

Therefore, our present inquiry is —

How believers, or any men whatever, may attain a right understanding in their own minds of the meaning and sense of the Scriptures, as to the doctrine or truths contained in them, in answer to the design of God, as to what he would have us know or believe; or —

How they may attain a right perception of the mind of God in the Scripture, and what He intends in its revelation, in opposition to ignorance, errors, mistakes, and all false apprehensions, and so, in a right manner, perform the duties which it instructs us in.

In answer to the inquiry proposed concerning the knowledge and understanding of believers in the mind of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, I will consider —

First, The *principal efficient cause*; and,

Secondly, *All the means*, internal and external, which are appointed by God for this.

As to the first of these, or the *principal efficient cause* of the due knowledge and understanding of the will of God in the Scripture, it is the *Holy Spirit of God himself alone*; for —

There is a special work of the Spirit of God on the minds of men, communicating spiritual wisdom, light, and understanding to them, that is

necessary to their right discerning and apprehending of the mind of God in his word, and their right understanding of the mysteries of heavenly truth contained in it.

And I will add to this, that among all the false and foolish imaginations that Christian religion was ever attacked or disturbed with, there was never any more pernicious than this: that the mysteries of the gospel are so exposed to the common reason and understanding of men, that they may know them and comprehend them in *a useful manner*, and *according to their duty*, without the effectual aid and assistance of the Spirit of God.

It is the silliest thing in the world to imagine that the Holy Ghost in any way teaches us except *in and by our own reasons* and understandings. We renounce all *emotionalism* in this matter, and do not plead for any immediate *prophetic inspirations*. Those who would prohibit the use of our reason in the things of religion, would deal with us as the Philistines did with Samson — first put out our eyes, and then make us grind in their mill. Whatever we know, of whatever sort, we know it in and by the use of our reason; and what we conceive, we conceive by our own understanding. The only inquiry is whether there is not a special work of the Holy Spirit of God, *enlightening our minds* and enabling our understandings, to perceive and apprehend his mind and will, as revealed in the Scripture, and without which we cannot do so. The substance, therefore, of the ensuing discourse may be reduced to these heads:

I. That we do not stand in need of any new divine *afflations*, or immediate *prophetic inspirations*, to enable us to understand the Scripture, or the mind and will of God as revealed in it; nor did the prophets or holy penmen of the Scripture *learn the mind of God* in the revelations made to them, and by them to the church, merely from their *divine inspiration*. Those immediate

inspirations were in the stead and in the place of the *written word*, and not otherwise. After they received them, they were by the same means, to inquire into the mind and will of God in them, just as we do: in and by the written word, 1Pet 1.10-11. [3]

II. That as to the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture, or our coming to the *riches of the full assurance of understanding in the acknowledgment of the mystery of God*,[Col 2.2] we do not, nor do we need to depend on the *authoritative instruction* or interpretation of the Scripture by *any church* whatever, or all of them in the world, even though there is great use for the true ministry of the church to that end.

III. That in the *mere exercise of our own natural reason and understanding*, with the help of external means, we cannot attain that knowledge of the mind and will of God in the Scripture, of the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost in it, which is required of us in a way of duty, without the special aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, it is principally asserted —

IV. That there is a special work of the Holy Spirit, in the *supernatural illumination* of our minds, needful for the end proposed — namely, that we may rightly, and according to our duty, understand the mind of God in the Scripture ourselves, or interpret it for others.

V. That hereby alone is to be obtained that full *assurance of understanding in the knowledge of the mystery of God*, his truth and grace, by which any man may respond to the mind and will of God, or comply with his own duty in all that he may be called to do or suffer in this world in his special circumstances. Therefore —

VI. The certainty and assurance that we may and ought to have of our rightly understanding the mind of God in the Scripture, either in general or

as to any special doctrine, does not depend upon, nor is it resolved into, any *immediate inspiration or enthusiasm.* It does not depend upon, nor is it resolved into, the *authority of any church* in the world. Nor is it the *result of our reason and understanding* merely in their natural actings, but only as they are elevated, enlightened, guided, and conducted, by an internal efficacious work of the Spirit of God upon them.

VII. That the means of the right interpretation of the Scripture, and understanding of the mind of God in this, are of two sorts —

first, those which are prescribed for us in a way of duty, such as *prayer, meditation* on the word itself, and the like;

secondly, *disciplinary*, in the accommodation of *arts and sciences* to that work, with all kinds of learning.

The first sort depends entirely on a supposition of the spiritual aids mentioned, without which they are of no use; and the latter is not only consistent with it, but singularly subservient to it. Therefore, the nature and use of all these means will be declared afterward.

This being the substance of what is designed in the ensuing discourse, it is evident that the positions laid down before, concerning the special work of the Spirit on the minds of men in communicating spiritual wisdom, light, and knowledge to them, is to be confirmed in the first place and principally, as that on which all the other assertions absolutely depend.

It is the Scripture itself alone from which the truth in this matter can be learned, and by which alone what is proposed concerning it must be tested. Therefore, as to this first part of this work, I will do little more than plead the express testimonies to this. When we come to consider the way and manner of the communication of these spiritual aids to us, the whole matter

will be more fully stated, and any objections which may be laid against our assertion, will be removed out of the way.

There are two ends designed in this undertaking:

The first end is what the evangelist Luke proposed in writing the Gospel to Theophilus — namely, "That he might know the certainty of the things in which he had been instructed," Luk 1.4. When we have been instructed in the truth of the gospel, and have given our assent to it, it is still needful to examine the grounds and reasons of what we believe, so that we may have a *certainty* or *full assurance* of them. Therefore, we will direct this: — namely, how a man may come to an *undeceiving persuasion and full assurance* that the things in which he has been instructed, and which he knows are true and according to the mind of God, so that upon this, he may "*no* longer be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive." Eph 4.14

The second end we design, is to inquire *what conduct* to this end a man ought to *resort to*, as to the right understanding of the mind and will of God in the Scripture — a man who takes care of his salvation, and who is convinced that he must give an account of himself to God in this matter. I will show that there is no safety in depending on *emotionalism*, or immediate, pretended, infallible inspirations, nor on the *pretended infallibility* of any church. Rather, *the Holy Spirit of God, enlightening our minds in the exercise of our own reason or understanding, and in the use of the means appointed by God to that end, is the only safe guide to bring us to the full assurance of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture*.

Therefore, the whole foundation of this work lies in these two things:

1. That there *is* such a *special work* of the Holy Spirit on our minds, enabling them to understand the Scriptures in a right manner, or to know the

mind of God in them;

2. In showing what the *special nature* of this work is; what its effects are on our minds; how it differs from all *enthusiastic inspirations*; and what the true exercise of our minds is in compliance with it. And these things are what we will first inquire into.

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1. *malæ fidei possesoribus.*
2. **Mat 23:4** "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.
3. **1Pet 1:10** Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, [11] searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

Chapter II. The general assertion confirmed with testimonies of the Scripture

The general assertion confirmed with testimonies of the Scripture — Psa 119.18 explained at large — Objections answered — 2Cor 3.13-18, Isa 25.7, explained — Luk 24.44-45, explained — Eph 1.17-19 explained and pleaded in confirmation of the truth — Hos 14.9.

The whole of our assertion is comprised in the prayer of the psalmist, Psa 119.18 —

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."

The substance of the same request is repeated various times in the same psalm, verses 33, 34, [1] etc. *Thus he* prayed. The substance of what we plead for is that it may be esteemed *our* duty to pray in *like manner*. What we pray for from God, we do not have in and of ourselves — as the ancient church constantly pleaded against the Pelagians. And what we pray for according to the mind of God, we receive. Therefore, our discerning, our understanding of the wonderful things of the law, is not of ourselves — it is *given* to us; it is what we receive from God.

But that the force of our argument from this testimony may be more evident, its words or terms must be explained, so that we may see whether they are equivalent to, or of the same meaning as, those laid down in our assertion:

1. The *object* of the understanding prayed for, the knowledge by which the psalmist would be illuminated, is *Torah* ("law"). The word used there signifies *instruction*. And being referred to God, it is *his* teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself — this is the same as what we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed, they were, for distinction's sake, distributed into the "Law," the "Psalms," and the "Prophets," Luk 24.44. Under that distribution, *Torah* signifies the five books of Moses. But because these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication of it, all its writings are usually called "the Law," Isa 8.20. Therefore, what the psalmist means by the *law* in this place, is all the books that were then given to the church by revelation, for the rule of its faith and obedience. And what is intended by the *law* in the psalms, is the written law. This is evident from the first of them, in which the one who "meditates on this day and night," is declared blessed, Psa 1.2. This respects the command of reading and meditating on the *books of this law* in that manner, Josh 1.8. What is therefore intended by this word, is the entire revelation of the will of God, given to the church for the rule of its faith and obedience — that is, the holy Scripture.

2. In this law there are "wonderful things." [2] The phrase signifies to be "wonderful," to be "hidden," to be "great" and "high;" that which men cannot attain to or understand by the use of reason (hence, they are things that have such an impression of divine wisdom and power upon them, that

they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us, as in Deu 17.8: "If a matter is too hard for you," or hidden from you.

And it is the term by which the miraculous works [3] of God are expressed in Psa 77.11, 78.11. Therefore, these "wonderful things of the law" are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture, which are above the natural reason and understandings of men to discover and comprehend. Such are the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, and especially because Christ is in them, whose name is "Wonderful," Isa 9.6 — for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him. God calls these things and doctrines "great." Hos 8.12, "I have written to [Ephraim] the *great* things of my law, but they were considered a strange thing." Because they were "wonderful" in themselves, Israel neglected and despised them, as foreign and *alien* to them, and did not belong to them. This is how many deal with the mysteries of the gospel at this day. Because they are heavenly, spiritual, and in themselves marvellous, hidden, and above the understanding of the natural reason of men — that is, because they are "wonderful," — they reject and despise them as things that are *alien* and foreign to their religion. Therefore, the "wonderful things" of the Scripture are those mysteries of divine truth, wisdom, and grace, that are revealed and contained in it, with their special respect to Jesus Christ.

3. Three things are supposed in the words concerning these "wonderful things:" —

(1.) That they are *recorded*, laid up, or treasured, in the law or Scripture, and nowhere else, so that from there alone they are to be learned and received: "Behold wondrous things out of your law." That alone is the sacred *parakatatheke*, or "repository" of them. [4] There are wondrous things in the works of nature and providence, and much of them is contained in the

treasury of reason, in which it may be discerned — but *these* things are stored in the law only, and nowhere else.

(2.) That it is our duty to *behold*, *discern*, and *understand* them, to have an inspection into them; and it is our great privilege when we are enabled so to do. This makes the psalmist pray so frequently, and so fervently, that he may discern them, or come to an acquaintance with them. Therefore, those by whom they are neglected, both despise their duty, and forsake their own mercy.

(3.) That we are not *able of ourselves* to thus discern them without divine aid and assistance. For the psalmist, who was wiser than the wisest of us, and who had so earnest a desire for these things, would still not trust his own reason, wisdom, ability, and diligence, for understanding them. Rather, he takes himself to God by prayer, acknowledging in this that it is *the special work of God, by his Spirit, to enable us to understand his mind and will as revealed in the Scripture*.

4. What the psalmist prays for is expressed in the words, the *act of God* towards us, by which God enables us to behold, discern, and understand the wonderful effects of divine wisdom which are treasured up in the Scripture. This is called his "opening of our eyes": "Reveal my eyes, uncover, unveil my eyes." There is a light in the word — all truth is light, and sacred truth is sacred light — indeed, the word of God is expressly called "light," Psa 36.9, 43.3, 119.105. But there is by nature a *covering, a veil*, on the eyes of the understandings of all men, so that they are not able of themselves to behold this *light*, nor to discern anything by it in a due manner. With respect to this, the psalmist prays that God would "reveal his eyes." *Revelare* is *velamentum levare*; "to reveal is to take off the veil or covering." And this is

the veil of our natural darkness, blindness, and ignorance, which we have treated elsewhere.

I do not see what is lacking for the explanation or confirmation of the position laid down before. The communication of spiritual light from God is the unique work of the Holy Ghost. He is the immediate author of all spiritual illumination. It is by virtue of this alone, that we can know or understand the mind of God in the Scripture in such a manner as God requires us to do. Whoever has received the grace of this divine *illumination* may do so — so far as he is concerned in point of faith or obedience. [5]

The *law* is the *Scripture*, the written word of God. In this law are "wonderful things," or mysteries of divine wisdom, contained and revealed. To *behold these things*, is to discern and understand them rightly with respect to our own faith and obedience. We cannot do this without a *supernatural act* of the Spirit of God upon our minds, enabling them to discern them and understand them; these things are in the text "indisputably." And from this we further argue that it is our duty to pray for *spiritual, supernatural aid* to enable us to do what, of *ourselves*, we are not able to do without that aid and assistance — or at least that we may do it by virtue of that aid and assistance. By just consequence, this includes the substance of what is pleaded for. But it is our duty to pray for such *aid*, that we may rightly understand the revelations of the mind and will of God in the Scriptures — this is the only thing to be proved.

There is but one thing which I can foresee that may with any pretense of reason be *objected* to this testimony of the psalmist in particular. And this is that he speaks of the times and writings of the *Old Testament*:

"Now, it is confessed that there was a *darkness* and obscurity in them; and as such they needed new *revelations* for understanding them. But since all things are 'brought to light by the gospel,' [6] there is no need for any special aid or assistance of the Holy Spirit by *supernatural illumination*, for understanding them."

Ans. In answer to this I will consider the discourse of the apostle in which he states this whole matter:

"And not like Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look at the end of what was to be abolished. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which is done away in Christ… Nevertheless, when they turn to the Lord" (or, are *turned* to the Lord) "the veil will be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord," 2Cor 3.13-14, 16-18.

When Moses had received the *revelation* of the law from God, "his face shone," Exo 34.29; for there were wonderful things contained in that revelation with respect to Jesus Christ — he was *in* them all, and the *end* of them all. The whole ministry of Moses was but a testimony given to the things that were *afterward to be spoken* concerning Christ, as the apostle declares in Heb 3.5.

On receipt of this revelation, "his face shone," because there was a light, a luster, a glory, in the things revealed to him, and reflected by them on his ministry, which was represented by this. Nevertheless, this *light* did not shine immediately into the hearts and minds of the people. They did not see or discern the glorious and "wonderful things" that were in the law; for there was a *double veil* or covering that hindered them — one that was put

on *Moses' face*, and another that was on their *own hearts*. They had some dark apprehensions and glances of light, but "they could not look steadfastly at the end of what was to be abolished;" they could not comprehend the truth concerning Christ, which was the substance and end of the law.

The *first veil*, which was on the face of Moses, was the obscurity of the instructions given to them, wrapped up in *types, shadows*, and *dark parables*. They could not see through this so as to clearly discern the "wonderful things" contained in and under them. This *veil* is quite taken off in the revelation or *doctrine of the gospel*, in which "life and immortality are brought to light," 2Tim 1.10 and the wonderful things of the mystery of God in Christ are fully declared and plainly expressed. In this, therefore, it is acknowledged that there is a great difference between those under the *Old* Testament, and those under the *New*.

But the apostle says there is *another veil, a veil upon the heart*. And he declares two things about this: 1. That this veil is *done away only in Christ*; and, 2. That it is therefore *not* taken away from any but those who are *converted to God*. This is the *covering* of ignorance, darkness, and blindness, that is on men by nature.

The *former veil* is taken away by the *doctrine of the gospel*; this latter is to be removed only by an *effectual work of the Spirit of Christ*, in the conversion of the souls of men to God.

Two things ensue on the removal of this *double veil:*

1. As to the doctrine itself concerning the mystery of God in Christ, it is no longer represented to us in *types, shadows*, and *dark parables*, but in the clear *mirror of the gospel*, on which the glory of Christ is reflected. Hereby the *veil* is taken off the *face of Moses*.

2. That we have an "open, uncovered face," or, as the Syriac has it, a "revealed eye," by which we are enabled to discern the wonderful mysteries of God that are so revealed. This ensues on taking away the *second veil* of darkness and blindness which is on the hearts of all by nature.

The removal and destruction of this *double veil* by the Spirit and grace of the gospel, is what is prophesied in Isa 25.7, "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering covered," [7] or the *double veil*, "that is on the face of all people, and the veil veiled [8] over all nations."

This being the design of the discourse of the apostle, it is evident that although there is a difference between those under the *Old Testament* and us under the *New*, as to the *veil* that was on the *face of Moses* — which is destroyed and removed by the *doctrine of the gospel* — yet there is no difference as to the *veil* which is on the *hearts of all* by nature, which must be removed by the *Holy Spirit*; otherwise we cannot "with *open face* behold the glory of the Lord," — the thing which the psalmist prays for in the place insisted on. That is, that by his Spirit God would more and more renew his mind, and take away his natural darkness and ignorance, that he might be able to behold, perceive, and understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. And if anyone supposes or says that for their part, they need no such special *aid* and *assistance* to enable them to understand the mind of God in the Scripture — that it is sufficiently exposed to the common reason of all mankind — then I will only say at present, that I am afraid they do not understand those places of Scripture where this *aid* and *assistance* is so expressly affirmed to be necessary to it.

But the meaning of the psalmist will better appear if we consider the communication of the grace he prayed for others. This is expressed in Luk 24.45, "Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the

Scriptures;" — a needless work if some men may be believed; but our Lord Jesus Christ did not think so. The truths concerning him were revealed in the Scripture, that is, in the law, and the prophets, and the psalms, verse 44. The disciples read these; they were instructed in them; these writings were preached to them every Sabbath-day; and they were probably as well skilled in the *literal sense* of Scripture propositions, as those among us who highest pretend to be so skilled.

However, they could not understand those "wonderful things" in a way of duty, and as they ought to do, until the Lord Christ "opened their understandings." What was needful for them, was an immediate gracious act of his divine power on their minds to *enable* this. And I cannot much value those men's understanding of the Scripture, whose *understandings are not opened* by the Spirit of Christ.

If we need the *opening of our understandings* by an act of the power and grace of Christ, so that we may *understand the Scriptures*, then without it, we cannot do so — namely, so as to believe and yield obedience according to our duty. This consequence is evident; for if we could do it, there was no need for this act of Christ towards those disciples who were not destitute of any *rational abilities* required to this end. And the act of Christ in "opening their understanding" is openly distinguished from the *proposition* of the doctrine of the Scripture to them — which was made in two ways: first, in the *Scripture* itself; secondly, in the oral discourse of our Savior upon it. Distinct from both these, is that act by which he "opened their understanding, so that they might understand the Scriptures." Therefore, nothing but a *real internal act of grace*, in the illumination of their minds, can be intended by it. The nature of this will be further explained afterward.

But there is an eminent passage that must be pleaded distinctly to this purpose:

Eph 1.17-19, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe."

This is the whole of what we would assert, and nothing else. And if men would acquiesce by faith in what is declared here, we would need to plead this cause no further. The *words and expressions* of the truth used here are more *emphatic* to a spiritual understanding than any others we can find; and I will only show in opening them, how our position and sense are contained in them. What the apostle does here for others, it is unquestionably our duty to do for ourselves. And so — 1. We are to pray that God *would enable us by his Spirit to know and understand his mind and will as revealed in the Scripture*. Therefore, we cannot do this without special aid and assistance from him by his Spirit. And, 2. The *aid* he gives us consists in the *effectual illumination* of our minds, or the enlightening of the eyes of our understandings.

These things are plain, and I suppose not liable to any exception; and these are all we plead for. Let them be granted without any other distinctions or limitations except what the Scripture will justify, and there is an end to this difference. But some particular sections in the words may be considered, to better understand and further confirm the truth contained in this passage.

1. It is a *revelation* that the apostle prays for, or that a *Spirit of revelation* be given to them. This greatly offends some at first hearing, but it is wholly without cause; for he does not mean a new *immediate external revelation from God*. Believers are not directed to look for such revelations as their guide. Ever since the Scripture was written, most of the church was obliged to attend to that alone, as their only rule of faith and obedience. Although God reserved for himself a liberty under the Old Testament — and until the completing of all the books of the New, to add *new revelations* as he pleased — he always bound the faith and obedience of the *present church* to what he had already revealed. By the Spirit of his Son, he has now put an end to all expectation of any *new*, of any *other* revelations, in which the faith or obedience of the church should be concerned. At least, we take it for granted in this inquiry that *infallible inspirations* in the discovery of things not revealed before, have ceased in the church. Nor do the *Papists* extend their *infallibility* to this, but only to things already revealed in the Scripture or tradition. What some among ourselves ascribe of this nature to their *light*, I do not well know, nor will I now inquire into it.

But there is an *internal subjective revelation*, by which no *new things* are revealed to our minds, or are not outwardly revealed *anew*, but our minds are now enabled to discern the things that are revealed already. All the things mentioned here by the apostle, which he desires that they might *understand*, were already revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in the New scriptures that were then written, and the infallible declaration of the gospel in the preaching of the apostles. But there was a new work of revelation required in and to every person who would understand and comprehend these things in a due manner. For "*revelation*" is the *discovery* of anything, whether by the *proposal* of it to us, or by *enabling* us to discern

it when it is proposed. It is used in the first sense in Rom 16.25; 2Cor 12.1, 7; Gal 1.12, 2.2; [9] — in the latter sense, in Luk 2.32; Eph 1.17-18. [10] When God opened the eyes of the servant of Elisha upon the prayer of his master, to see the horses and chariots of fire that were round about him, 2Kng 6.17, they were not *brought* there by the opening of his eyes — only, he was enabled to discern them, which he could not do before.

Or, as when anyone makes use of a *telescope* to behold things far off, no object is presented to him except what was really in the same place before; only, his *visual faculty* is assisted to discern them at that distance; and without that assistance, it could not reach to them. The Holy Spirit is here called, "The Spirit of revelation" *causally*, as he is the author or principal efficient cause of it. So in his communication to the Lord Christ himself, he is called "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;" that would "make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," Isa 11.2-3.

2. What the psalmist in the place insisted on before, calls in general, "wonderful things," the apostle expresses in particular; and he distributes them under various heads, as they were more clearly revealed in the gospel. Such are, "The hope of God's calling," "The riches of his glory," and "The exceeding greatness of his power in those who believe." These are some of the principal and most important mysteries of the gospel. We can have no other understanding of these things except as they are *revealed* in it, or in the revelation of them. And in the manner of his expression, he declares that these things are "wonderful," as the psalmist says; for "the riches of glory" is in them — which is beyond our comprehension. So he expressly affirms, Eph 3.8, that it is "past all investigation" or search. He uses the same word to set forth the ways of God, when his design is to declare they are

wonderful, or the object of our admiration: Rom 11.33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And there is "an exceeding" or inexpressible "greatness of power" in them.

Such are the things that are proposed to us in the Scripture. And the principal reason why some men judge it so easy a matter to understand and comprehend, by the *innate abilities* of their own minds, the revelations that are made in the word of God to us, is because they do not apprehend that there is anything *wonderful*, or truly great and glorious in them. And therefore, because they cannot raise their minds to a comprehension of these mysteries as they are in themselves, they corrupt and debase them to suit them to their own low, carnal apprehensions. This is the principle that works effectively in the whole of *Socinianism*. For if we grant that there are such "wonderful things," such mysteries in the gospel as we plead, the men of that persuasion will not deny that our minds stand in need of heavenly assistance to comprehend them rightly — for they deny them for no other reason than because their own reason cannot comprehend them.

3. Concerning these things so revealed in the word, the apostle prays for these Ephesians that they might *know them*. He also expresses the way by which alone they might be enabled to do so: — "That you might have a sight, perception, or understanding of them." He denies that a *natural man* has or can have this; he "cannot know them," 1Cor 2.14. It is true, it may be said by some, that he cannot know them unless they are *clearly* and fairly proposed to him — but no, not even then; not by the light and power of his own natural faculties. He cannot do so by the use of any outward means alone. It is futile to imagine that the apostle intends only that a *natural man* cannot know things that are never proposed to him. This is neither

weakness nor discommendation; for neither can the *spiritual man* know anything without a proposal.

Because it is this way with men by nature, the apostle therefore earnestly prays that these Ephesians might be enabled to understand and know these things. And he does it with an unusual solemnity, invoking the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory;" which argues for both a great intension of spirit in him, and great weight upon the matter of his request.

But what reason is there for this earnestness? What is lacking for these Ephesians? What would he yet have for them? Were they not *rational men* who had their eyes in their heads, just as well as others? Indeed, many of them were learned men, and skilled in all the "curious arts" of those days. For here it was that so many upon their first conversion, burned their books valued at "fifty thousand pieces of silver," Acts 19.19. Probably they were many of them who were very knowing in the *new and old philosophy*. Did they not have the Scripture also — that is, all the books of the Old Testament, and those of the New which were then written? Did the apostle and others not preach the doctrine of the gospel to them, including the things he mentions here? He declares and expressly testifies that he did, Acts 20.20, 27. Speaking to these very persons, that is, their leaders, he says, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you, but declared to you all the counsel of God," — namely, "what is the hope of his calling, and the greatness of his power." Eph 1.18 Were these things not sufficiently revealed, and clearly proposed to them? If they were not, then it was either because the apostle *could not* so reveal and propose them, or because he *would not*. If he *could not*, then he is praying that what was not so revealed to him, might be revealed to them; or that they might learn what he *could*

not teach them — which is foolish and impious to imagine. If he *would* not, then he is praying that they may know what he would not teach them, but which he could easily have taught — which is equally foolish to suppose.

What, therefore, do they still lack? What is yet further needful that they might know and understand these things? For we must know that we understand no more of the mind of God in the revelations that he makes to us, than we understand of the *things themselves* that are revealed by him.

I am persuaded that these Ephesians were generally as *wise*, and some of them as *learned, as* any in our days, whatever conceit they may have of themselves. Yet some of ours grant only this much: that they if have their wits about them, and the use of their reason, and they have the things of the gospel (its doctrines) rationally proposed to them as they are in the Scripture, they would defy the world to think that they still lack anything to enable them to *know* and rightly understand them.

"To fancy anything else is necessary to this, is *fanatical* madness. For what would men have? What *should* all of them have? Are not the doctrines of the gospel highly *rational*? Are not the things of the gospel eminently suited to the *reason* of mankind? Are not the books of the Scripture written in an *intelligible* style and language? Is there anything more required for the understanding of the mind of any author, than to conceive the *grammatical* sense of the words that he uses, and the nature of his propositions and arguings? Although St Paul, as some say, *is one of the obscurest writers they ever met with*,[11] surely by these means some good shift[12] may be made with his writings also. It is therefore *canting*[13] *and nonsense*, a reproach to reason and to Christian religion itself, to think that this is not enough to enable men to understand the mind of God in the Scriptures."

Well, let it be so, at present, as to the highly *rational abilities* of some persons. It cannot be denied that the apostle judged it necessary that these Ephesians should have the *special aid of the Spirit of God* to this end which he prays for. And we may be excused if we dare not think we are better than they were, nor that we have sufficient learning, wisdom, and reason above others, nor that we heed prayers of this nature less than they did. We find that the apostle renews his prayer for them again, to the same purpose and with great fervency, in Eph 3.14-19. [14] All the difference arises from this: the apostle judges that over and above the utmost exercise of our natural faculties and abilities, in the use of outward means, so that we may know the mind of God in the Scripture — things in which these Ephesians were not lacking— it is necessary that the "eyes of our understanding" be spiritually opened and "enlightened." But other men, it seems, do not think so.

If men were allowed to suppose that our minds were in no way vitiated, depraved, or darkened by the fall — and this supposition is the sole foundation of these assertions —then it is still most irrational to imagine we can comprehend and understand *the mysteries of the gospel* without special *spiritual illumination*. For the original light and abilities of our minds were not suited or prepared to receive and understand them — for their existence and revelation was inconsistent with the state of integrity. [15] Therefore, even if our minds were assumed to be as wise and perspicacious with respect to that natural knowledge of God and all that belongs to it, which was proposed to us or necessary for us in the state of nature, it still would not follow that we are able to discern the *mysteries of grace* when they are proposed to us. The truth is, if our minds are *not* corrupted or depraved,

then there is no need for the gospel or its grace; and if they *are* depraved, we cannot understand the mind of God in this, without special illumination.

But it may be objected that,

"These things are consistent. For notwithstanding men's *rational abilities* and the use of means, it is still fitting that men should pray for themselves; and also that others (whose duty it is) should pray for them also. This is fitting, so that they may be *diligent* in their inquiries, and obtain the *blessing of God upon their diligence*. But this does not prove at all that they are *not able of themselves to* apprehend and know the mind and things of God in the Scripture, or that anything is lacking in them, or to them, which is absolutely necessary to this."

Ans. I answer that, on these suppositions, there is indeed nothing lacking except what the apostle moreover prays for, which is *none* of these suppositions. And if what he prays for is not also requisite to this end, then his prayer is vain and useless. It is supposed here that men are diligent in the discharge of their duty in this, so that they may have the special blessing of God on it; and we will speak to this afterward. These are not the things that the apostle prays for here. Rather, he prays that God would give them the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to enlighten the eyes of their understanding," so they may know them, as will be declared shortly. And, indeed, I do not understand how this prayer can be suited to the principles of anyone who denies the necessity of this internal spiritual aid. For they cannot help but think it is strange to pray that a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" be given to their *whole congregation* — this would be a dangerous way, fitted to make them wiser than their teachers. And for themselves, other than using diligence and praying for a blessing on their diligence, they disavow any further concern in this matter.

4. The thing specially prayed for, to the end proposed, is that " the eyes of our understandings may be enlightened." This is what the psalmist prays for in the passage insisted on before (Psa 119.18), that "God would open his eyes;" and it is the *internal work of illumination* that is intended.

Now, although the main force of the argument depends on these words, I will not insist on them here, because I must say something more in particular to the nature of this work afterward. Besides, I have elsewhere [16] declared at large what that darkness is which here is supposed to be on our minds or understandings; what its nature, efficacy, and power is; how it is taken away and removed, what the nature of that spiritual light is which is communicated to us in and for its removal. All I will observe at present from these words is, in general, that there *is a special work of the Spirit of God in enlightening the eyes of our understandings*, that is necessary to our discerning the mysteries of the gospel in a due manner; this is what was to be proved.

5. What is declared concerning the author of this work in us, or the principal efficient cause of it, further confirms the same truth — this author is the *Holy Spirit*, "That he would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation." That the Holy Spirit is the immediate author of all supernatural effects and operations in us, has been proved at large elsewhere; and what he is promised or given in the gospel to effect, is nothing that is in our own power. Therefore, the ascription of the *communication of this ability* to the Holy Ghost is sufficient evidence that we lack it in ourselves. All the things affirmed here concerning the manner of his communication to us, and his properties communicated to us, evidence the nature, and evince the truth, of the work ascribed to him.

As for the first, it is by the *grant, donation, or free gift* of God the Father: Eph 3.17, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you…" God is called "The King of glory," Psa 24.7-8, and "The God of glory," Acts 7.2, with respect to his own glorious majesty. But he is "The Father of glory" as he is the eternal spring and cause of all glory to the church. And these titles are prefixed to this grant or the request of it: "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." This is done to intimate that it proceeds from his relation to us in Christ, with that love and bounty in which he is the cause of all grace and glory to us. Therefore, receiving this Spirit *by free donation*, as we do (Luk 11.13), [17] all that we receive from him and by him, we also have by way *of a free gift* or donation. Therefore, this ability of *understanding the Scripture*, and the mysteries of the truth contained in it, is a mere *free gift of God*, which he bestows on those whom he will. So our Savior told his disciples, "It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom or heaven, but to them" (to others) "it is not given," Mat 13.11, those who still heard his words and understood the literal sense of the propositions used by him, as well as the disciples did.

Whoever, therefore, has this ability to know the mysteries of the gospel, he has it by *free gift* or donation from God. He has received it, and he may not boast as if it were from himself, and that he had not received it, as the apostle says in 1Cor 4.7.

Again, the properties ascribed to him, as thus communicated for this end, are "*wisdom* and *revelation*."

He is the "Spirit of wisdom." So in communicating him in all fullness to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, he is called "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding," Isa 11.2. That is because he was to make Christ of "quick understanding [18] in the fear of the Lord," verse 3. He is a

"Spirit of wisdom" essentially in himself, and *casually* or efficiently to others; and these things mutually demonstrate each other. That he is the cause of all wisdom in others, is a demonstration that he is *essentially* wise in himself. For, "He that planted the ear, will he not hear? He that formed the eye, will he not see?" And because he is essentially wise, he must be the author of all wisdom to others. For all good must come from what is infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably so, Jas 1.17. [19] He is therefore called "The Spirit of wisdom" on both these accounts: as he is *essentially* so in himself, and as he is the *efficient cause* of all wisdom to others. It is in the latter way, directly, that he is termed so here. This property is specifically ascribed to him, as thus given to us to "open our eyes" with respect to the work which he is to do. For wisdom is required for this — that wisdom which may deliver us from being really *fools* ourselves, and from judging the things of God to be folly.

Wisdom is required for this: "Who is wise? He will understand these things. Who is prudent? He will know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just will walk in them. But transgressors will fall in this," Hos 14.9. Lack of this wisdom is the cause that wicked men take offense at and dislike the ways of God: because they do not spiritually understand them. And so they cast themselves into destruction. And it is about the same things that the prophet affirms, that "none of the wicked will understand, but the wise will understand," Dan 12.10. And it is called "The wisdom of the just," Luk 1.17.

This wisdom is not in us by nature. Men are naturally "wise in their own conceit;" and if this is continued in, it is a hopeless frame of mind, Pro 26.12. And it does not evidence itself more, than in apprehensions of their own ability to comprehend spiritual things, and in their contempt for what

they do not comprehend, as being folly (1Cor 1.18, 23). [20] And with respect to this, the apostle gives us this advice as our duty, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," 1Cor 3.18.

This is a matter in which men are very apt to deceive themselves, even to conceive of themselves as wise, and to trust to this wisdom in the things of God; this alone is what he treats there. Because, therefore, the special promise of God is to teach the *meek* and the *humble*, there is nothing that sets men at a greater distance from divine instruction, than a proud conceit of their own wisdom, wit, parts, [21] and abilities. Therefore, the Spirit of wisdom frees the minds of believers from this other wisdom, which is the daughter of natural darkness and the mother of proud spiritual ignorance. This is done in the way that will be declared afterward. And in this, he is to us a "Spirit of wisdom." Moreover, he gives us that "wisdom which is from above," which we are directed to "ask of God," Jas 1.5. Without this wisdom which he works in us, no man can understand the wisdom of God in the mystery of the gospel. Whoever is thus made wise will understand these things, and none else. There is, therefore, a *gift of spiritual wisdom* and understanding necessary to this, so that we may discern the "wonderful things" that are in the word of God. To whom this is not given, they do not know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Let men please or pride themselves while they will in their own wisdom and learning, and dismiss the consideration of these things in our inquiries after the mind of God. The lowliest believer who has received this wisdom from above, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, knows more of the mind of God in a due manner than they do.

When our Lord Jesus Christ affirmed that he came into the world "that those who do not see might see" — or to communicate spiritual, saving light to the minds of men — the Pharisees, who had great apprehensions of their own *wisdom* and understanding in the law, replied with scorn, "Are we blind also?" Joh 9.39-40. It did not prove otherwise, and that was to their eternal ruin. Yet I do not judge as *practically* blind, all those who do not *doctrinally* accept that receiving this wisdom and light is from above. For although we do not make ourselves differ from others, nor have anything in a way of spiritual ability except what we have received, yet some are apt to *glory* as if they had not received it, as the apostle intimates in 1Cor 4.7. Therefore, the Holy Spirit as given to us, is said to be a "Spirit of wisdom," because he *makes us wise*, or works wisdom in us. We do not have this wisdom of ourselves; for to suppose that, would render the word of God of no effect. It is necessary for this spiritual wisdom to be bestowed on us, and worked in us, that we may know the mysteries of the gospel or understand the mind of God in this. And that is all we plead for.

I have longer insisted upon this testimony, because the whole of what we assert in general, in the nature, causes, and effects of it, is fully declared in this. And it was the way by which those of old came to understand divine revelations, or the mind of God, as revealed in the Scripture. If others who seem to scorn all mention of the *teaching of the Holy Ghost*, have found a more expedited course to the same end, I do not understand it, nor do I desire to participate in it.

1. **Psa 119:33** Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it *to* the end. [34] Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.
2. נִפְלָאוֹת *pala'* [OT:06381].
3. פִּלְאֶךָ *pele'* [OT:06382] – wonders.
4. **1Tim 6:20** O Timothy! Guard what was committed (*parakatatheke*) to your trust; also 2Tim 1.14, "the good deposit."
5. There are some things in Scripture that are not so clear as others, and some which will remain mysteries. But whatever is necessary for faith and obedience is made sufficiently clear by the Spirit, to *all* believers. **2Pet 1:2** Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue…
6. 2Cor 4.4; 2Tim 1.10.
7. (*paniym lowt*, OT:06440, 03875) הַלּוֹט הַלּוֹט.
8. (*maccekah nacak*, OT:04541, 05259) וְהַמַּסֵּכָה הַנְּסוּכָה.
9. **Rom 16:25** Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began; **2Cor 12:1** It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: **2Cor 12:7** And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. **Gal 1:12** For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through

the revelation of Jesus Christ. **Gal 2:2** And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.

10. **Luk 2:32** A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." **Eph 1:17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, [18] the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;

11. As indicated in 2Pet 3.16.

12. *Shift*: a start or arrangement that enables further progress (Middle English).

13. *Canting*: empty, hypocritical talk.

14. **Eph 3:14** For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [15] from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, [16] that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, [17] that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height-- [19] to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

15. That is, the state of Adam prior to the fall.

16. See his *Treatise on the Holy Spirit*, book iii. chap iii. vol. iii. of his works. — Ed. (which is in Part I of *Pneumatologia*)

17. **Luk 11:13** "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to

those who ask Him!"
18. *ruwach* OT:07306; this is not *ru'ach* (OT:07307, spirit) – figuratively, it means to accept what can be sensed, but not touched.
19. **Jas 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.
20. **1Cor 1:18** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **1Cor 1:23** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness;
21. Either our natural capacity, or perhaps our position in the church (our authority as a cleric, theologian, etc.).

Chapter III. Other testimonies pleaded in confirmation of the same truth.

Other testimonies pleaded in confirmation of the same truth — Joh 16.13 explained — How far all true believers are infallibly led into all truth is declared, and the manner how they are led — 1Joh 2.20, 27, explained — What assurance of the truth those have who are taught by God — Eph 4.14; Job 36.22, Joh 6.45 — Practical truths inferred from the assertion proved.

There are still other testimonies which may be pleaded to the same purpose; for the Holy Ghost is promised to all believers for this end: Joh 16.13, "When the Spirit of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth."

The Holy Spirit is called "The Spirit of truth" principally on the same account as God is absolutely called "The God of truth;" he is this *essentially*. He is the first, absolute, divine, eternal verity. So he is originally called "The Holy Spirit." on account of his *essential* holiness. But it is not solely on that account that he is called "The Spirit of truth" here. He is so called as he is the *revealer* of all divine, supernatural truth to the church, just as he is also called "The Holy Spirit," as he is author of all holiness in

others. Therefore, he is promised here to the church, as it is his work to *lead us into all truth*.

And two things are to be considered in this promise:

1. What is intended by *all truth*;

2. How the Holy Spirit *guides* or *leads* us into it:

1. With respect to the *object* —

(1.) It is not *all truth absolutely* that is intended. There is *truth* in things that are natural and civil, and *stories* of things that are past; but nothing of this nature is comprised in this promise. We see believers of all sorts who are as ignorant of many of these things, and as unacquainted with them, as any other sort of men whatever; and yet not one word of the promise of Christ falls to the ground. Therefore, *all that truth*, or all truth of that nature, which our Savior speaks of there, is alone intended. The mysteries of the gospel, of the kingdom of heaven, the counsel of God about the salvation of the church by Christ, and those concerning their faith and obedience, are the truth which he is promised to guide us into. The apostle calls this, "All the counsel of God," Acts 20.27 — namely, that which respects all the ends of our faith and obedience, verse 21.

(2.) It admits a *limitation* with respect to the diversity of subjects, or the persons to whom this truth is to be communicated. Not all of them are to be led into all truth *equally*, as to the *degrees* of light and knowledge. Every one to whom he is thus promised, will be so far led into knowledge of it, as is necessary to his own estate and condition, his duty and his work. For "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph 4.7. It is Christ alone who, in the free gift of all grace, *assigns the measures in which* every one will be made a partaker of it. In his sovereign will, he has allotted the measures of grace, light, and knowledge

to all the members of the church; and there is no less difference in *these measures* than in the knowledge of the most glorious apostle and that of the lowliest believer in the world. The duty, work, and obedience of every one, is the *rule of the measure* of his receiving these gifts of Christ. None will lack anything that is necessary for him; none will receive anything that he is not to use and improve in a way of duty.

2. Our second inquiry is, how the Spirit thus *leads* us into all truth. The external revelation of truth is supposed in this. He is promised to instruct us in the knowledge of this in a spiritual manner. I understand this to mean, no more than as it is required of us in a way of duty. To clarify the truth of this, some things must be observed; such as —

(1.) The promises concerning the *mission of the Holy Spirit in* chapters 14-16 of the Gospel of John, are not to be confined to the *apostles*, nor to the *first age or ages of the church*. To do so is expressly contradictory to the discourse and whole design of our Lord Jesus Christ to that purpose; for he promises him in opposition to his own temporary abode in the world, namely, "that the Spirit may abide with you forever," Joh 14.16; "I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age," to the *consummation* of the whole state of the church here below, Mat 28.20. And to suppose the contrary, is to overthrow the foundation of all truth and comfort in the church. For their preservation in the truth, and the administration of comfort to them, depend on the accomplishment of this promise alone. So also do all the benefits of the intercession of Christ, which are not communicated to us other than by the *Holy Spirit*, as given in pursuit of this promise. For what he prayed for his apostles in this, he prayed for all of those who would believe in him through their word, to the end of the world, Joh 17.20.

(2.) It is granted that various things in the promises of the Holy Ghost were specific to the apostles, and had their accomplishment on the day of Pentecost when he descended on them in that glorious, visible manner, Acts 2.1-4. For just as they were commanded by our Savior *to wait for his coming* before they engaged in the discharge of that office to which he had called them, Acts 1.4, so they were now fully empowered and enabled for all that belonged to this office.

But their particular interest in these promises, respected only things that were specific to their office — things that are not mentioned in Act 1.4.

(3.) *External guidance* into the truth by the objective revelation of it, is not intended here. For such revelations are not granted to all believers to whom this promise is made; nor are they to look for them. And the revelation of truth in the ministerial proposal of it, is common to all the world to whom the word is preached — and so it is not the subject of a special promise.

(4.) Therefore, it is the *internal teaching* of the Holy Ghost that is intended, giving an understanding of the mind of God, and of all sacred truths as revealed: for —

[1.] It is the same as that other promise, "They will all be taught of God;" for we are thus taught of God by the Spirit's leading us into all truth, and not otherwise.

[2.] The word enforces this. "The Spirit of truth will lead and guide you in the right way to the knowledge of the truth." Joh 16.13

So when Philip asked the eunuch whether he understood the things which he read out of the prophet Isaiah, he replied, "How can I, 'unless one leads me' to the sense of it?" — that is, "by His interpretation, give me an understanding of it," Acts 8.31. [1] Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth,

by giving us that understanding of it which we are not able to attain of ourselves. And the words will not allow other interpretations. It is therefore the Spirit's work to give us a useful, saving understanding of all sacred truth, or of the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. All spiritual, *divine, supernatural truth* is revealed in the Scripture. In this, all are agreed. The knowledge, the *right understanding* of this truth as so revealed, is the duty of all, according to the means which they enjoy and the duties that are required of them. Nor can this be denied. To this end, that they may do so, the Holy Spirit is here *promised to those who believe*. His divine aid and assistance is therefore necessary to this. And we are to *pray for* this, as it is promised. Therefore, of ourselves — without His special assistance and guidance — we cannot attain a due knowledge and understanding of the truth revealed in the Scripture. As for the special nature of this assistance, it will be spoken to afterward.

This, again, is affirmed concerning *all* believers,

1Joh 2.20, 27, "You have an *unction* from the Holy One, and you know all things. The *anointing* which you have received from him abides in you, and you do not need any man to teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you will abide in it." [2]

1. With respect to the end of the *unction* and *anointing* mentioned in this passage, the Spirit of God and his work are intended. This is not questioned by any who are soberly conversant about these things. And this is plain in the text; for —

(1.) It is evident in many places of the Scripture, that the Holy Spirit in his special operations is called an *unction*, or is said to *anoint* us: see Heb 1.9;

2Cor 1.21-22. [3] Nor is a spiritual unction ascribed to anything else in the whole Scripture.

(2.) The expression, "which you have from the Holy One" (Acts 3.14, Rev 3.7) — that is, *Jesus Christ* — expressly corresponds to Christ's promise to send us his Holy Spirit. And that is for the end mentioned here: namely, to teach us, and lead us into all truth. This is why he is called "The Spirit of the Lord," or "of Christ," 2Cor 3.17-18; Rom 8.9; Phi 1.19, etc.

(3.) The expression of his "abiding in us" is also nothing but an expression of the same promise of Christ that he will "abide with us forever," Joh 14.16.

(4.) The work assigned here to this unction, is expressly assigned to the Holy Spirit: Joh 16.13, "The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth."

(5.) What is said about it — namely, not only that *it is true, and not false*, but that it is "*truth, and is no lie*," — plainly intimates his *essential* verity.

I cannot help but wonder that anyone should, against this open and plain evidence, ascribe the things mentioned here to anything else, and not exclusively to the Holy Ghost. For some contend that this unction *only intends the doctrine of the gospel*. [4] It is true that the doctrine of the gospel, in the preaching of it, is the means or instrumental cause of this teaching by the Holy Ghost. And on that account, what is spoken of the teaching of the Spirit of God may be spoken, in its place, of the doctrine of the gospel, because he teaches us by it. But here it is spoken of *objectively*, as what we are to be taught, and not *efficiently*, as to what teaches us. And to say, as they do, "It is the instruction which we have by the gospel that is intended," is to assert the *effect* only, and to exclude the *cause*. For it signifies no more than this: that the effect of the unction ascribed here to believers, is what they received from the Holy One. Didymus, an ancient learned writer,

interprets this *unction* to be the *illuminating grace* of the Spirit, and the *Holy One* to be the *Spirit himself.*[5] But the other interpretation is more proper and consonant to the use of the Scripture. The expression is taken from the institution of God under the Old Testament, by which kings and priests were *anointed* with oil, to signify the gifts of the Spirit communicated to them for the discharge of their office. And thus believers, who are real partakers of the internal *unction* in the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, are said to be "made kings and priests to God." Rev 1.6

Therefore, it is the work of the Holy Spirit that is described here. He alone, and his gifts, graces, and privileges that ensue from it, are thus expressed here or anywhere else in the whole Scripture.

2. Two things are to be observed in what is ascribed here to this unction:

(1.) What the *effect* is of his work in believers;

(2.) What the *nature* of it is, or how he produces that effect.

(1.) For the first, there is a double expression of the effect:

[1.] That they "know all things;"

[2.] That they "do not need any man to teach them;" — both these expressions allow, indeed they require, their limitations.

[1.] The "all things" that are intended, come under a double restriction — the first is taken from the *nature* of the things themselves; the other from the *scope* and circumstances of the passage; or, the one from its general end, and the other from the special design that is proposed.

1*st*. The *general end* proposed, is our abiding in Christ: "You will abide in him;" which the apostle expresses by, 1Joh 2.24, "continuing in the Son, and in the Father." Therefore, the *all things* mentioned here, are all things necessary to our ingrafting into and continuance in Christ. Such are all the fundamental, indeed, the important truths of the gospel. All true believers

are taught whatever is needful for our communion with Christ and our obedience to him. Believers may be mistaken to some extent in things of *lesser moment*, and be ignorant in the doctrine of some truths, or have but small degrees of knowledge in anything. However, they will *all* know the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture, in all those things and truths which are necessary that they may "believe unto righteousness and make confession unto salvation." Rom 10.10

2*dly*. The *special end* under consideration is preservation and deliverance from the antichrists and seducers of those days, with the errors, lies, and false doctrines which they divulged concerning Christ and the gospel. The only way and means by which we may be so preserved from the poisons and infections of such pernicious opinions and ways, is the assured knowledge of the truths of the gospel as they are revealed in the Scripture. All those truths which were in any way needful to secure their faith, and preserve them from *mortal* seductions, they were taught and knew. And where any man knows the truths which are required for his implantation into Christ, and his continuance with him in faith and obedience — with all those truths which may preserve him from the danger of seduction into pernicious errors — however far he may fail and be mistaken in some things of lesser importance, he is yet secured as to his present acceptable obedience and future blessedness.

And by the way, this gives us the *rule of our special communion and love*. Where any are *taught* these things, where they have the knowledge and confess that truth, or those articles of faith by which they may "abide in Christ," and are *preserved from pernicious seductions* — even though they may differ from us and from the truth in some things of less moment — we are obliged not only to forbear with them, but to *communion* with them. For

who would refuse those whom Christ has received? Or does Christ refuse any to whom he gives his Spirit, who have the *unction* from the Holy One? This, and no other, is the rule of our *evangelical love* and communion among ourselves. Whatever more we require of anyone as a necessary condition of our Christian society, in point of doctrine, is an unwarrantable *imposition* on their consciences, or practice, or *both*.

[2.] It is said that they know these things in such a way that they "do not need any man to teach them." This also requires a limitation or exposition; for —

1*st*. This respects only those things declared before. Now, besides these, there are many other things which believers need to be taught continually, and such knowledge belongs to their *edification*. Many things are very *useful* to us that are not absolutely *necessary*. In natural things, and those which belong to this present life, men would be very unwilling to be without or to part with various things; and yet, without them, life might be preserved. This is because they value them as useful to themselves, thus enabling them to be useful to others. And those who understand the nature, use, and benefit of *evangelical truths*, will not be content that their knowledge of them be confined only to those truths which are of *absolute necessity* to the being of spiritual life. Indeed, those who pretend to have such satisfaction in them as to look no further, cannot well be supposed to know those truths themselves. For all who are sincere in faith and knowledge, aim at that "perfect man in Christ," which all the ordinances of God are designed to bring us to, Col 1.28. Therefore, notwithstanding the knowledge of these things, there is still use and need of further ministerial teaching in the church.

2*dly*. It is said of these things *absolutely*, and not with respect to the *degrees* of the knowledge of them. They so knew these truths that there was no need for any man to teach these truths to them as to their *initial knowledge*, and the substance of the things themselves; and this may be said of all believers. Yet there are *degrees of knowledge* with respect to those very things, which they may and ought to carry on to, as the apostle says in Heb 6.1. [6] And therefore the holy apostle, who writes these things, *further instructs* them in these truths.

The principal part of the ministry of the church consists in this: to carry believers on to perfection in those things in which, as to their substance, they have already been instructed.

3*dly*. What is principally intended is that they do not need any man to teach them, such that they should depend on the *light* and *authority* of that man's instruction. Others may be *helpers of their joy*, but none can be *lords of their faith*. "You need no such teaching, because of the *unction* which you have received." [7]

(2.) As for the general nature of the work ascribed here to this *unction* — that is, the Holy Spirit — it is *teaching*: "The unction *teaches* you." There are only two ways by which the Spirit teaches us, nor can any other be conceived. The one is by *objective* revelations; the other is by *subjective* ones. For He teaches us as a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation." The first way of his teaching is by immediate inspiration, communicating new sacred truths from God immediately to the minds of men. This is how he taught the *prophets* and *apostles*, and all the penmen of the Scripture. The word of the Lord came to them by Him; and they spoke as they were moved by Him, 1Pet 1.11-12; 2Pet 1.21. This is not the way of teaching intended here. For the end of *that* teaching of the Holy Ghost, was only to make men teachers

of others, which is not intended in 1Joh 2.20. [8] Nor does the apostle discuss any such purpose, as though God would grant *new revelations* to men to preserve them from errors and seductions, when he has made sufficient provision for that in the word, Isa 8.20; 2Pet 1.19. [9] Before they received them, they were to test all doctrines and pretended revelations by this word, as to which ones were really so, 1Joh 4.1. [10] Besides, what is affirmed here, is ascribed to all sorts of believers under the categories they are cast into by the apostle — namely, "old men," "young men," and "babes," who had not all received the Spirit of immediate revelation.

The Spirit's other way of teaching is that which we have insisted on — namely, his enabling us to discern, know, and understand the mind and will of God, as revealed in the Scripture, or as declared in any divine revelation. Only this is, or can be, intended here. Therefore, this is the design of the apostle in these words:

All divine truths necessary to be known and to be believed, so that we may live to God in faith and obedience, or come to and abide in Christ, and also be preserved from seducers, are contained in the Scripture, or are proposed to us in divine revelations. Of ourselves we cannot understand these to the ends mentioned. For if we could, there would be no need to be taught them by the Holy Spirit. Bit this is so: he teaches us all these things, enabling us to discern, comprehend, and acknowledge them. And this is the whole of what we plead for.

For a close to our considerations on these words of the apostle, I will only observe what assurance a man may have who is thus taught the truth, that what he is taught *is* the truth, and that he is not deceived in his apprehensions of it. For on this depends the *use* of this instruction, especially in times of trial — indeed, at all times and on all occasions. It is

not enough that we *know* the truth, but we must be *assured* that we know it: see Eph 4.14; Col 2.2. [11] And there was never a greater *artifice* in the world than that by which the *Roman church has* imposed an impregnable, obstinate credulity on all who adhere to this. For it first fixes in their minds that it *cannot err*, and therefore whatever is proposed to them by her authority, is infallibly true. Hence it comes to pass that they obstinately abide against all convictions and the highest evidence of truth in all particular instances. They do so while this principle is firmly fixed in their minds: that the church which proposes these things to them *cannot err* or be mistaken. Indeed, while this persuasion abides with them, they may be, and indeed they are, accordingly obliged to believe contradictions — things that are most irrational and absurd, inconsistent with Christian piety and the peace of human society. However, they well say in this, that it is necessary for a man to have *good assurance* of the truth which he professes, or of his own understanding and conception of it. The apostle calls this "The riches of the full assurance of understanding," Col 2.2. We will speak of this afterward.

The assurance of mind in other teachings greatly depends on the *authority* of those by whom they are taught, on a supposition that believers are taught the mind of God in the Scripture by the Holy Spirit, or the are enabled by him to discern and know it. And therefore the inquiry is this: how or by what means believers have an *assurance* that they have a *right understanding* of the things which they are taught, so as to abide in them and in the profession of them, against all opposition whatever; and so as to venture the eternal condition of their souls on *that assurance* which they have of the truth — which every believer must do, whether he will or not. In the text, this assurance is referred to the *author* of this teaching: "The

anointing is truth, and is no lie" — it is true, and infallibly so. There is no fear, no possibility, of any man being deceived in what he is taught by this *unction*. And an assurance of this arises in our minds partly from the *manner* of His teachings, and partly from the *evidence* of the things themselves that we are taught. The manner and way of His teaching us in and by the Scripture, evidences to us that what we are taught "is truth, and is no lie." He gives a *secret witness* to what he teaches in his teachings; for "it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth," 1Joh 5.6.

And with respect to the evidence which is thus given to us of the truth, it is said that the "unction" by which we are taught "is truth, and is no lie" — that is, it is impossible for anyone to be deceived who is thus taught. This will be more fully apparent when we have declared the whole of His work in this. Only, something may now be said on occasion of this testimony.

There is a unique power accompanying the teaching of God by his Spirit: "Behold, God exalts by his power: who teaches like him?" Job 36.22. So our Savior expounds that promise, "They will all be taught by God." "Every man therefore that has heard," he says, "and has learned from the Father, comes to me," Joh 6.45. There is such an efficacy accompanying God's teaching, that whoever is taught by Him, certainly believes the things he is taught, having the evidence of their truth in himself.

When of old the Holy Ghost gave new *revelations* to the prophets and penmen of the Scripture by *immediate inspiration*, in and with this inspiration he communicated to them an infallible evidence that they were from God. And when he *illuminates our minds* in the knowledge of what is revealed, in this he bears witness to and assures us of the truth which we understand. Hereby we come to what the apostle calls "The full assurance of understanding, in the acknowledgment of the mystery of God." Col 2.2 He

not only enables our minds to apprehend the truth, but he shines into our hearts, the seat of spiritual experience, to "give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2Cor 4.6 The assurance which believers have by this, is above that which any other evidence or demonstration can give. The lowliest believer has from this teaching a greater rest, satisfaction, and assurance in the knowledge of the mind of God, than any that can be attained by the most raised notions, or profound disputations. For "he that believes has the witness in himself," 1Joh 5.10. Why should others think it strange that there should be such evidence of truth in the teaching of the Spirit, by the illumination of our minds in the knowledge of the Scripture, that it gives us an assurance of the highest nature, seeing that there is "none that teaches like him?" Job 36.22

Lack of this assurance is what makes men fluctuate in their conceptions of spiritual things, and makes them so ready on every occasion, to part with what they have received. The church of Rome, as we observed, has *craftily* rather than *wisely* provided against any inconsistency in this. Many of the doctrines it teaches are false. Thus the things contained in them can give no evidence to the minds of men; for there is nothing but *imagination* in error — there is nothing of substance in it.

And their *way of teaching* is not accompanied with any special advantage. Indeed, it is the most vain that was ever in the world. They would have men suppose that they may advance at once in the true belief of a *hundred things* for which they have no evidence, resting merely on the infallibility of the church by which they are *proposed*. Therefore, they teach men that although they receive no evidencing light in this way of instruction, nor have any experience of the power or efficacy of truth in what they are taught, they may rest assuredly in the *infallibility of the church*. Hence, the assurance

they have of anything that they suppose is truth, is not an act of the mind in embracing that truth from any evidence it gives of itself. Rather, it is a presumption in general that the *church is infallible*, by which these things are proposed to them. [12] The design is to prevail with men to suppose that they believe *all things*, when indeed they believe *nothing* — that they understand the mind and will of God, when indeed they understand nothing at all about them. For a man believes nothing that is not accompanied with the evidence on which it ought to be believed. But they do not pretend to this, at least not in a way that would give them that requisite assurance of its truth. For that assurance, they refer all men to the *infallibility* of the church. Persons who are weak, ignorant, credulous, or superstitious — either for the interest or by the craft of seducers — may be prevailed on to resort to this relief. But those who will not forego the rational conduct of their own souls, and will not abandon themselves to the guidance of others — knowing they alone must give an account of themselves to God — will not easily be induced to this.

Others will resolve it all into their own *rational conceptions* of things, without any respect to a superior infallible teacher. The minds of many, influenced by this notion *that they have themselves alone to trust to*, have come to the utmost uncertainty and instability in all things of religion. Nor can it be otherwise: for the mind of man in itself, is indifferent and undetermined toward anything, such as "true" or "false", beyond the evidence that is proposed to it (except in its first notions of the common principles of reason). [13] And thus the mind is *various, unsteady*, and apt to fluctuate from one thing to another. There are only two ways by which it may be naturally ascertained and determined in its conceptions and assent. The first is by the use of the *external senses*, which will not deceive it. [14]

However, it can only receive, believe, and comply with what it comprehends by its *senses; such as* what it sees, hears, and feels. The second is by *reason*, by which it deduces certain conclusions from propositions of necessary truth — that is, by *demonstration*.

But neither of these ways can bring the mind to stability and *assurance* in or about spiritual or supernatural things; for these are not the objects of *natural* sense, nor are they capable of *scientific* demonstration. For this reason, a man can have nothing but a probability or conjectural knowledge concerning them, *unless* he has some certain, *infallible teaching* in which he can acquiesce. And such is this "unction," which "is truth, and is no lie." In and by His teaching us — namely, the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture — there is such evidence of truth communicated to our minds and hearts, that it gives us an immovable assurance of them, or the "full assurance of understanding." For in this, God "shines in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ."

Again, there is evidence in the things themselves, for *spiritual sense and judgment*. [15] This is what gives the mind the highest assurance it is capable of in this world, of the truth of what it believes. For when it *finds in itself* the power and efficacy of the truth in which it is instructed — that it works, effects, and implants the things themselves upon the mind, giving and ascertaining to it all the benefits and comforts which these things promise or express, and is thereby united to the soul, or has a real, permanent, efficacious subsistence in it — then, I say, the mind has the utmost assurance in the truth of it, which it does or can desire in things of this nature. But this does not belong to our present design.

The testimonies pleaded are sufficient to confirm our first general assertion *that it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to rightly understand the*

mind and will of God in the Scripture. Without His aid and assistance, we can never do so either usefully or profitably to our own souls. Assorted other testimonies that speak to the same purpose will be insisted on afterward, on various occasions.

I might add to these testimonies the faith and profession of the church in all ages. They all believed and professed that the Scriptures could not be understood and interpreted without the assistance and inspiration of the One by whom they were written. But it is not *necessary* to do so; for those who profess to trust to their own reason and understanding only, cannot be so ignorant as not to know that no countenance is given to their persuasion in antiquity, unless it was by the Pelagians. But there is no profitable handling of sacred truths on any pretense, without an eye to the guidance of Christian practice. And when that is manifest, it gives great confirmation in our minds as to the truth itself. Therefore, before I consider the *special ways in which the Holy Spirit teaches* in this matter, and the *special duties* required of us in compliance with them, so they may be effectual, I will divert a little to some considerations of that nature, which derive from this general assertion.

It is the great promise of the New Testament that all believers will be *didaktoi tou Theou*, [16] "taught by God;" which our Savior himself pleads as the only ground of their believing, Joh 6.45. And so the apostle tells the Thessalonians that they were "taught by God," 1Thes 4.9. [17] No man is "taught of himself," [18] his own teacher and guide in sacred things; nor can any man have a worse master, if he trusts to this alone. We always assume the diligent use of all outward means appointed by God to this end, so that through the knowledge of the Scripture, we may be made "wise unto salvation." 2Tim 3.15 Among these means, the *ministry of the church has* the

first and highest place, Eph 4.12-15. [19] For with me, those who think it is not worth the utmost of their diligence to attain the knowledge of those "wonderful things" that are in the word, are of no account. Indeed, if I did not know the reasons and causes for it, I would greatly wonder at the stupidity of those who do not give much *credit to the Scripture* testifying of itself, and the suffrage of all good men with it, [20] that there are "wonderful things" contained in it — not even so far as to inquire with their utmost diligence whether it is so or not. But, there must be a *supreme teacher* on whose wisdom, power, and authority we ought to principally depend, as to this end of being taught by God.

And this end requires the use of our own reason, the utmost improvement of the rational abilities of our minds. Those who would take away the *use of our reason* in spiritual things, would deal with us, as we said before, as the Philistines dealt with Samson — first put out our eyes, and then make us grind in their mill. The Scripture we own as the only rule of our faith, as the only treasury of all sacred truths. The knowledge we aim at is the "full assurance of understanding" in the mind and will of God, which is revealed in it. The sole inquiry is whether this supreme teacher is the Spirit of God instructing us in and by the Scripture; or whether it is the authority of any or all of the churches in the world, which either are or pretend to be such. Which of these will it be our wisdom to choose, and to adhere to? We already proved that the Holy Spirit has taken this work on himself, and afterward we will further demonstrate it. Some churches, especially that of *Rome*, assume this office for themselves. But it is too well known to most, to be trusted in this; and a great prejudice lies in this cause against that church at first. The Holy Spirit leaves to us (indeed, requires of us) the *diligent* use of the Scripture and the exercise of our own reason, in

subservience to his teaching. But the church of Rome requires us to renounce them *both*, and to comply with herself.

Can it stand in competition with Him? He is infallible; the *unction* "is truth, and is no lie;" the Spirit is truth. Indeed, the *church of Rome pretends* to this also, but with such an open affront to all evidence of truth, as the world has never undergone from any of its people before. The Spirit is absolutely, infinitely, eternally *free from any design* but the glory of God, in the present and eternal good of those who are instructed by him. It will be very difficult for those of *Rome* to pretend to this. Indeed, it is apparent that the entire exercise of their *instructing authority* lies in subservience to their own interest. When I see that by a pretense of this, men have gotten themselves *wealth, power, principalities,* and *dominion*, with great revenues, and use them all to their own advantage — mostly to satisfy their lusts, pleasures, pride, ambition, and similar inordinate affections — I confess that I cannot be free to surrender the conduct of my soul to them, blindfolded. The Spirit is full of *divine love* and care for the souls of those whom he instructs. Is it so with them, or can *any* creature participate in His love and care? He is infinitely wise, and "knows all things, yes, the deep things of God." He can make known to us what he pleases of them, as the apostle discusses in 1Cor 2. Those who preside in that church are ignorant themselves, as all men are — and the less they know it, the more ignorant they are. Indeed, for the most part, as to *sacred things*, they are comparatively ignorant with respect to other ordinary men. A late *pope*, when some of their divines waited for an infallible determination of a *theological controversy* among them, confessed that *he had not studied those things, nor had the knowledge of them been his profession!*

Yet, notwithstanding these and several other differences between these *teachers*, it is marvellous to consider how many resort to human teachers, and how few resort to the Spirit of God. And the reason is because of the different *methods* they take in teaching, and the different *qualifications* they require in those who are to be taught. For as to those whom the Spirit of God undertakes to instruct, he requires that they be *meek* and *humble*; that they give themselves to *continual prayer, meditation*, and study in the word *day and night*; above all, that they endeavor for conformity in their whole souls and lives to the truths that he instructs them in. These are hard conditions *for flesh and blood*. There are few who like them, and therefore few who apply to the *school of God*. We may be admitted as *scholars* by the other sort of *teacher*, at far cheaper and easier rates. Men may be made "good *Catholics*" as to faith and understanding, without the least cost in *self-denial*, or much trouble for the flesh in any other duty.

There is no qualification required for the admission of a man into the *Catholic schools*; just to be there is to be wise and knowing enough. Therefore, even if all advantages imaginable lie on the one hand as to the *teachers*, the pretended easy way of learning drives the multitude to the other. For it requires more wisdom than we have of ourselves to accept that charge, with all the pains in spiritual duty, and diligence in the use of all means for the right understanding of the mind of God, which is required in and of all those who would advantageously partake of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Why do so, when it is supposed that we may have all the ends we aim at, in an easy and naked assent to the proposals of the church, without the least additional charge or trouble? But these are the measures of *slothful and carnal minds*, who prefer their ease, lusts, and pleasures, before their souls. There is difficulty in all things that are excellent. Nor can we

partake of the excellence of anything unless we undertake its difficulty. But although the ways by which we come to have a share of the teaching of the Holy Ghost may seem at first rough and uneasy, yet for all who engage in them, they will be found to be "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace." Pro 3.17

It may be objected that,

"It is evident in common experience that many men attain a great knowledge and skill in the things revealed in the Scripture, without any of that internal teaching by the *illumination* of their minds which is pleaded for — especially if it is to be obtained by the means now intimated, and to be more fully declared afterward. For they renounce the necessity of any such teaching, and consider all that is said about it, to be a vain imagination. And not only so, but some of them live in open defiance of all those qualifications and duties which are required for participation in these teachings. Yet it is foolish to pretend that they are not skilled in the knowledge of *divinity*, seeing it is plain that they excel most other men in this. And therefore they sufficiently despise all those who pretend to any benefit by the *supernatural illumination* contended for."

I answer briefly here that it is true; there are and ever were some, indeed *many*, who "profess that they know God, but deny him by their works, being abominable and disobedient." Tit 1.16 The knowledge which such men may attain, and which they profess, does not belong to our inquiry. We may easily discern both what this knowledge is, in itself, and how it differs from that true knowledge of God which it is our duty to have: for —

1. In the Scripture, with respect to the mind and will of God revealed in it, along with the mysteries of truth and grace, there is mention of "knowledge," and of "acknowledgment."

The former (knowledge), if it is alone, affects only the *speculative part* of the mind with notions of truth; it is of very little use, and subject to the highest abuse, 1Cor 8.1. [21] It puffs up men in all their proud contentions about religion, which the world is filled with. The other (acknowledgment) gives the mind an experience of the power and efficacy of the truth that is known or discovered, so as to transform the soul and all its affections into it, and thereby it gives a "full assurance of understanding" to the mind itself. [22] It is not worth disputing at all what the first kind knowledge, or what degree of this knowledge, men may attain by their industry and skill in other common arts and sciences — *any* men, even the *worst* of men. For what if they were to gain such a proficiency in this as to be filled with pride in themselves, and to confound others with their subtle disputations — will any real profit redound from this to themselves, or the world, or the church of God? It does not, therefore, deserve the least contention about it. But that *acknowledgment* of the truth which affects the heart, and conforms the soul to the will of God as it is revealed, is not attainable in any degree without the *saving illumination* of the Spirit of God.

2. Men may have a knowledge of *words*, and the *meaning* of propositions in the Scripture, who have no knowledge of the *things themselves* that are designed in them. The things revealed in the Scripture are expressed in propositions whose words and terms are intelligible to the common reason of mankind. Every rational man, especially if he is skilled in those *common sciences and arts* which all writings refer to, and without any special aid of the Holy Ghost, may know the meaning of the *propositions* that are laid down in, or drawn from the Scripture. Indeed, those who do not believe one word of it to be true, can do so just as well as the best of them, who have no *other help* in the understanding of the Scripture than their own reason,

whatever they may profess to believe. And whatever men understand of the meaning of the *words*, *expressions*, and *propositions* in the Scripture, if they do not believe the *things* which they declare, they do not in any sense *know the mind and will of God* in them. For to know a thing as the mind of God, and not to assent to its truth, implies a contradiction. I will never grant that a man rightly understands the Scripture, who understands only its words, and not the things in them, which is the mind of God. For instance, the *Jews* understand the words of the Scripture of the Old Testament in its own original language; and they are able to perceive the *grammatical sense* and construction of the propositions contained in it. Those who will not acknowledge their skill, cunning, and accuracy in these things, are unacquainted with the Jews and their writings. Yet no Christian will say that the Jews *understand the mind of God* in the Old Testament.

The apostle shows the contrary, and gives the reason for it, in the place insisted on before, 2Cor 3. No wise man will value such a knowledge of the Scripture, however it may be attained.

3. This knowledge that may be thus attained, only *informs the mind* in the way of an *artificial science*; but it does not really *illuminate* it. And to this end, men have turned *divinity* into an art, like other common human arts and sciences. And so they learn the art, instead of a *spiritual wisdom and understanding of divine mysteries*. It is true that the knowledge of common learned arts and sciences is of great use to understanding the Scriptures — as to what they have in *common* with other writings, and as to what they refer to that is of human cognizance. But to bring all the terms, notions, and rules of those *arts and sciences into divinity*, and by mixing them with it, to compose a *scheme* of divine knowledge — this is the same as if a man designed to construct his *house* of the *scaffolds* which he only uses in

building it. Such is that knowledge of the mind of God in the Scripture, which many aim at and content themselves with. And it may be attained, as any other *art* or *science* may be attained, without any supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit. It is sufficient to *run a trade with*, which (as things are stated in the world) men may use and exercise to their great advantage. But as said before, this is not what we inquire after. That wisdom in the mystery of the gospel, that knowledge of the mind and will of God in the Scripture, which *affects the heart*, and *transforms the mind* in the renovation of it, to approve the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," as the apostle says in Rom 12.2 — that alone is valuable and desirable as to all spiritual and eternal ends.

4. It does not give "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God," as the apostle says in Col 2.2. [23] It gives men no other assurance of mind in the things that they know, than what they have in any other science, from its acknowledged principles and the conclusions drawn from them. But that knowledge which men have of the mysteries of the gospel, by the teaching and illumination of the Holy Spirit, gives them "the riches of assurance of understanding" of a higher nature, even the assurance of faith. That assurance which believers have in spiritual things, I say, is of another nature and kind than can be attained from conclusions that are only rationally derived from the most evident principles. And therefore it produces *effects* of another nature, both in doing and in suffering.

For this is what effectively and infallibly pushes believers to all those duties, and that obedience in self-denial, and in the mortification of sin, which the world either does not know, or despises. For "he that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as Christ is pure," 1Joh 3.3. And this also

enables them to cheerfully and joyfully suffer all that the world can inflict on them for the profession of those truths of which they have that assurance. But nothing of this ensues from that common knowledge which men may have from themselves of sacred things; for —

5. Such knowledge does not enable men to *trust in God*, and adhere firmly to him by love. The psalmist, speaking to God, says, "Those who know your name will put their trust in you," Psa 9.10. To "know the name of God," is to know the revelations that he has made of himself, of his mind and his will, in the Scripture. Those who have this knowledge, he affirms, "will put their trust in him." Therefore, it is certain that those who do *not put their trust in God*, do not have this knowledge of him. There is a "knowledge falsely so called," [24] which has nothing of real spiritual knowledge but the name; and it is generally given to much disputing, or maintaining antitheses or oppositions to the truth. But it is *falsely* called *knowledge*, inasmuch as those who have it, neither *trust* in God, nor *adhere* to him in love. We will not inquire much about the means by which such a knowledge may be acquired.

It therefore remains (notwithstanding this objection) that all real useful knowledge of the "wonderful things" that are in the Scripture, is an effect of God's *opening our eyes* by the illuminating grace of his Holy Spirit.

1. And this will enable us to "test the spirits" of many among us, as we are commanded. For there are some who have at once cast off a due respect for the Scripture as their *rule*, and the Holy Spirit of God as their *guide*. Some previously pretended to have such a guidance by the *Spirit*, that they neglected or rejected the *written word*; and some pretend to have such an adherence to the *word*, and such an ability in their own minds and reasons to understand it, that they despise the *teaching of the Spirit*. Others reject

both the one and the other, taking themselves to another *rule* and *guide*, to which they ascribe all that belongs to either or both of them. But it has proved a *wandering light* to them, which has led them into a bog of many vain imaginations and corrupt opinions. And it has fallen out with them as might be expected. For although the Holy Spirit is promised to lead us into all truth, he is promised in a special manner as to those truths which immediately concern the person, offices, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit he is. [25]

Therefore, those who renounce a dependence on him for instruction out of the word, are either left to palpable *ignorance* about these things, or to *foolish, corrupt imaginations* concerning them. Hence some of them openly deny, some faintly grant (but evidently corrupt) the truth concerning the person of Christ; and they seem to have little regard for his offices and grace. What else can be expected from those who despise the *teaching of that Spirit* of Christ who is promised to lead us into all truth concerning him? Nor will the loudest pretenses of some to *the Spirit* in this matter relieve them. For we do not inquire after *every spirit* that anyone who will, may boast of, but only that Spirit who instructs us in and by the written word. Until such men return to the only rule and guide of Christians, until they own that it is their duty to seek the knowledge of truth from the Scripture alone, and in doing so, not depend on anything in themselves, but on the saving instructions of the Spirit of God, it is in vain to contend with them. For they and we build on different foundations; and their faith and ours are resolved into different principles — ours into the Scripture, and theirs into a light of their own. There are therefore no common acknowledged *principles* between us on which we may convince each other. And this is the reason why disputes with such persons are generally

fruitless, especially as immixed with that intemporance of reviling other men, which they exceed in. For if that is a way either of learning or of teaching the truth, it is not what the Scripture has instructed us in. When the *veil* is taken from their eyes, and they are turned to the Lord, they will learn more modesty and humility.

In the meantime, the issue between these men and us is this and no other: We persuade men to take the Scripture as *their only rule*, and the holy promised Spirit of God *for their guide*, in the use of all means appointed by Christ to that end, sought by ardent prayers and supplications. They deal with men to turn into themselves, and to attend to the light within them. While we build on these most distant principles, the difference between us is irreconcilable, and it will be eternal. If we could come to an agreement here, other things would fall away by themselves. If we were to *renounce the Scripture*, and the instruction given to the church from it by the Spirit of God, taking ourselves to *our own light*, we are sure it would teach us nothing but either what they profess, or other things that are altogether as corrupt. On the other hand, if they were to forego their attendance to their pretended light, and hearken to *the voice of God in the Scripture* only, and sincerely beg the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this, they would learn nothing else from it than what we profess.

Therefore, until they return to "the law and the testimony" Isa 8.20 — without which, whatever is pretended, there is no *light* in anyone — we have no more to do than, in laboring to preserve the flock of Christ in the profession of the "faith once delivered to the saints," Jud 1.3 to commit the difference between the *word and the Spirit* on the one hand, and the *light within* on the other, to the decision of Jesus Christ at the Last Day.

2. It is from no other root that contempt for the mysteries of the gospel, and preferring other doctrines before them, has sprung up into so much bitter fruit among us. It is by the "*Spirit of wisdom and revelation*" alone that our minds are enlightened to "know what is the hope of God's calling, and what are the riches of his glorious grace." What his work is upon our minds in this, and what his work is upon the word itself, will be declared afterward. At present, from what has been proved, it is sufficiently evident that without his special gracious aid and assistance, no man can discern, like, or approve of the mysteries of the gospel. Is it any wonder that persons who avowedly deny most of his *blessed operations*, are either unacquainted with or dislike those *mysteries*, preferring what is more suited to their natural understanding and reason? For why should men esteem those things which they do not understand (at least as they should), or make use of the means by which they may be enabled to do so? Therefore, if there are persons of such pride and profaneness as to undertake an inquiry into the Scriptures, to know the mind of God in them, and teach it to others — and do so without prayers and supplications for the teaching, leading, guidance, and assistance of the Holy Spirit, or (which is worse) who condemn and despise all those things as *enthusiastic* — it may not be expected that they will ever understand or approve of the mysteries that are contained in it.

Is it not from this, that both teachers and hearers make so *slow a progress in* the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, or grow so little in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? How many there are among us who, for the time and outward means available, have become like babes, and need *milk*, and not strong meat! Why is it that so many teachers endeavor so little *to go on to perfection*, but content themselves to dwell on the rudiments or *first principles* of our profession? Is there not great

studying, and little profiting? Great teaching, and little learning? Much hearing, and little thriving? Do we abide in prayer, and abound in prayer as we should, asking for that Spirit who alone can lead us into all truth? For that unction which teaches us all things with assurance and experience? I fear our defect lies here. However, I will say this: that there is no duty which we perform to God in this world that is more acceptable to him, than *fervent prayers* for a right understanding of his mind and will in his word. For on this depend all the glory we give to him, and the due performance of all our obedience.

1. Ostensibly *Philip* is giving the interpretation; but Philip was "taught of God." Even so, without God's Spirit enabling the Eunuch, whatever Philip might have shared with him, could not have been understood. "Unless one is born again…", Joh 3.3; 8.43.

2. The end of verse 27 is normally rendered, "and you will abide in **Him**." (the Greek is the reflexive *autos*).

3. **Heb 1:9** You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." **2Cor 1:21** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, [22] who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

4. *Episcopius in loc.,* after Socinus on the same passage. Simon Episcopius (1583–1643) Dutch theologian and Remonstrant who played a significant role at the Synod of Dort in 1618. Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) Italian theologian whose anti-Trinitarian theology led to the development of Unitarianism.

5. *de Spir. Sanc*. lib. ii. – Didymus the Blind (c. 313–398) — a Christian theologian in the Coptic Church of Alexandria.

6. **Heb 6:1** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

7. Douay-Rheims translation of 1Joh 2.27.

8. **1Joh 2:20** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

9. **Isa 8:20** To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. [NKJ] **2Pet 1:19** And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place;
10. **1Joh 4:1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
11. **Eph 4:14** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting; **Col 2:2** that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ;
12. That is, it is *hearsay* evidence – it is not conviction of the truth itself. And so their faith is not placed directly in God's truth about Christ, or in Christ himself, but in the church. The Roman Church thus interposes itself between believers and God, as the means of their salvation, because it has made itself the means of their faith. – WHG
13. Some things are true *a priori*, without evidence. Descartes (1596-1650): "I think, therefore I am."
14. That is, external senses that are not deceived. Owen is excluding illusions and delusions here.
15. **Phi 1:9** This I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment; **Heb 5:14** But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
16. διδακτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

17. θεοδίδακτοι *Theo-didaktoi – God-taught.*

18. αὐτοδίδακτος *auto-didaktos – self-taught*.

19. **Eph 4:12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, [13] till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; [14] that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, [15] but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ;

20. *Suffrage*: testimony.

21. **1Cor 8:1** Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

22. Phi 1.9; Luk 1.4; Col 1.6, 9, 10; 2.2; 3.10; Rom 10.2; Eph 1.17, 4.13; 1Tim 2.4; 2Tim 2.25, 3.7; Tit 1.1; 2Pet 1.2, 3, 8; 2.20.

23. πάντα πλοῦτον τῆς πληροφοφίας τῆς συνέσεως εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ.

24. γνῶσις ψευδώνυμος. 1Tim 6.20

25. **Joh 16:13** "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. [14] "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. [15] "All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you. **1Joh 2:20** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. **1Joh 2:27** But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all

things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Chapter IV. The work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our mind

The special work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds for understanding the Scripture, declared and vindicated — Objections proposed and answered — The nature of the work asserted — Psa 119.18; Eph 1.18; Luk 24.45, 1Pet 2.9; Col 1.13, 1Joh 5.20, explained and vindicated.

I suppose we have sufficiently confirmed our first general assertion concerning *the necessity of a special Work of the Holy Ghost in the illumination of our minds, to make us understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture*.

What we now proceed to show is the *special nature* of his work in this. And I will take occasion to do this from the consideration of an objection laid against the whole of what we affirm, which was touched on before. For it is said that there is no need for this endeavor.

"All men acknowledge that the aid of the Spirit of God is necessary to the study and interpretation of the Scripture; and so it is for all other undertakings that are good and lawful. And in this consists the blessing of

God upon man's own diligence and endeavors. If this is what is intended, namely, the blessing of God upon our endeavors in the use of means, it is granted. But if anything else is designed, it does nothing but to remove all industry in the use of means, and to reject all helps of reason and learning, which in the end is to reduce it to pure emotionalism." [1]

Ans. 1. Whether assigning his *own work* to the Spirit of God takes away or weakens the use of *other means* for the right interpretation of the Scriptures, will be tested when we come to examine those ways and means. At present I will only say that we establish them — for by assigning them to their proper place and use, we manifest their worth and necessity. But those who advance any of those means into the place of, and to the *exclusion* of, the operation of the Holy Spirit, destroy those means; or they render them unacceptable to God and useless to the souls of men. We will therefore manifest that what we assign in this matter to the Holy Spirit, renders all our use of proper means indispensably necessary to the right *interpretation of the Scripture*, in a way of duty. And so far as I can understand, the principal reason why some deny the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in this, is because they do not like those means whose necessary use arises from an admission of the Spirit's work.

But thus it has fallen out in other things. Those who have declared anything either of the *doctrine* or the *power* of the grace of the gospel, have been maligned as opposing the principles of morality and reason. When in truth, it is on those grounds alone that their true value can be discovered and their proper use directed. So by preaching faith in Christ, with righteousness and justification by faith, the apostle was accused of having made the law void. Yet without his doctrine, the law would have been void, or of no use to the souls of men. So he pleads, Rom 3.31, "Do we then make void the

law through faith? God forbid: indeed, we establish the law." So to this day, these are supposed to be inconsistent:

- justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of our own obedience;
- the efficacy of divine grace in conversion, and the liberty of our own wills;
- the stability of God's promises, and our diligent use of means.

So it is here also: the necessity of the communication of spiritual light to our minds to enable us to understand the Scriptures, and the exercise of our own reason in the use of external means, are looked at as irreconcilable. The apostle says, "Do we make void the law through faith? Indeed, we *establish* it;" though he did not do it in that place, nor for those ends that the Jews would have had and used it. So too, we may say, "By asserting the righteousness of Christ, do we make void our own obedience? By the efficacy of grace, do we destroy the liberty of our wills? By the necessity of spiritual illumination, do we take away the use of reason? Indeed, we *establish* them." We may not do it in such a way or in such a manner as some would fancy, which would render them all really useless on our part; but we do it in clear consistency with, and in proper subservience to, the work of God's Spirit and grace.

Ans. 2. What in particular lies before us is to remove that pretense of some, *that we need no other assistance of the Spirit of God for the right understanding of the Scripture, but only his general blessing on our own endeavors*. To this end, two things are to be inquired into:

(1.) What description is given of this *work* in the Scripture, and what its effects are in our minds in *general*;

(2.) What the *nature of it* is *in particular*.

(1.) The work itself is variously expressed in the Scripture. It is that which (whether we will it or not) we must be determined by in things of this kind. And the variety of expression serves both to confirm its truth and illustrate its nature.

[1.] It is described as *opening our eyes*, Psa 119.18; *enlightening the eyes of our understanding*, Eph 1.18. This opening of our eyes consists in the communication of spiritual light to our minds by the preaching of the word, as it is declared in Acts 26.17-18.[2] And the expression, though *metaphorical* in part, is eminently instructive in the nature of this work.

For suppose we have the nearest and best-disposed presentation of any object to our bodily eyes, with an external light properly suited to discover it. Yet, if our *eyes are blind*, or closed beyond our own power to *open* them, we cannot rightly discern it. Therefore, suppose the divine truths of supernatural revelation are presented to our minds; and it is done in ways and by means that are suited to its conveyance to our minds — which is done in the Scripture, and by the ministry of the church, with other outward means. Yet, without this work of the Spirit of God, called "opening our eyes," we cannot discern it in a due manner. If this is not what is intended in this expression, then it is in no way *instructive*; rather, it is suited to lead us into a misunderstanding of what is declared and of our own duty. So it is plainly expressed in Luk 24.45, "Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." None, I suppose, will deny that it is the work of the Spirit of God to thus *open our eyes*, or to *enlighten our understandings* — for this would be to deny the express testimonies of the Scripture, which are frequently reiterated. But some say he does this by the *word* only, and the preaching of it. No work of his, they say, is necessary to this, or to make us rightly discern the mind of God in the Scripture, other

than having it proposed to us in a due manner — provided we purge our minds from prejudices and corrupt affections. And this is the work of the Spirit, in that he is the *author of the Scriptures*, which he makes use of for our illumination.

It is granted that the Scripture is the only *external means* of our illumination; but in these testimonies, it is considered only as the *object* of this illumination. They express a work of the Spirit or grace of God *upon our minds*, with respect to the Scripture as its object: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." The law or the Scripture, with the "wonderful things" contained in it, are the *things to be known,* or discovered and understood. But the means enabling us to do this, is an *internal work* upon our minds themselves, which is plainly expressed in distinction from the *things to be known*. This is the sum of what we plead. There is an efficacious work of the Spirit of God opening our eyes, enlightening our understandings or minds, to understand the things contained in the Scripture, distinct from the objective proposition of those things in the Scripture itself. The testimonies that are urged, fully confirm this.

[2.] It is expressed as a *translation out of darkness into light*: "He has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1Pet 2.9; "delivered us from the power of darkness," Col 1.13; by which we who were "darkness, become light in the Lord," Eph 5.8. What is intended in these and like testimonies, is the removal of the inward darkness of our minds by the communication of spiritual light to them, and not merely the objective revelation of truth in the Scripture. I have proved this at large elsewhere, and therefore I will not insist on it again.

[3.] It is directly called *giving us an understanding*: "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true," 1Joh 5.20. The object of our understanding, or what we know, is "*him that is true*." God himself, specifically the Father, is primarily intended in this expression. For in the following words there is mention of "his Son Jesus Christ," who in like manner is said to be "true," because of his unity in essence with the Father. And therefore it is added, "This is the true God." But we are also to know what concerns *our being "in him*," and to know *him as he is "eternal life*." These things contain the substance of all evangelical revelations which, one way or another, depend on them, and are resolved into them. To know the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture, is to know the *Father*, "the only true God," Joh 17.3, and also the *Son* as "the true God," [1Joh 5.20] in the unity of the same essence; to know "that *eternal life* which was *with the Father*," 1Joh 1.2, as to the eternal counsel and preparation of it, and which is *in the Son* [1Joh 5.11] for its actual communication to us; and to know *our being in him* by participation in this [2Pet 1.4] — which are the things we mentioned. Especially these things are intended, for they are "foolishness" to corrupted *reason*, and as such they are rejected by it, 1Cor 1.23-24, 2.14. [3]

We are to inquire into two things with reference to this *knowledge*:

1*st*. What we are to have to enable us for it: and that is an *understanding*.

2*dly*. How we come by it: *It is given to us by the Son of God*.

1*st*. What we have is, *dianoia* [NT:1271]. This word in all other places of the New Testament constantly denotes the essential faculty of our souls, which we call *understanding*. [4] And in the Scripture it seems to be distinguished from the *mind*, with respect to *actual exercise* only. The mind in its exercise is our understanding. But it cannot be the natural and

essential faculty of our souls that is intended here. For although our natures are corrupted by sin, and are not repaired except by Jesus Christ, neither that corruption, nor its reparation, denotes the *destroying* or new *creation* of this being, or the nature of those faculties, which continue the same in both estates. Therefore, the understanding mentioned here is no more than *a power and ability of mind with respect to what is proposed to us*, to receive and apprehend it in a due manner. We are not able of ourselves to know Him that is true, and the eternal life that is in Him, unless he has enabled us for it. For this *understanding* is *given* to us to the end that we may know him.

Therefore, we cannot know whatever is proposed to us in the gospel, or in any divine revelation concerning these things (at least as we ought to), unless the *understanding* mentioned here is given to us; for by this alone do we come by it.

2*dly*. It is *given* to us. It is evident from every place in the Scripture where it is used, that what is intended in this word, of giving from God, is a real and *effectual communication* to us of the thing that is said to be *given*. Some contend that God is said to *give things* to us when *he does what lies in him*, [5] so that we may enjoy them, even though we are never made partakers of them. But assigning this way and manner to God, of *doing what lies in him*, where the effect intended does not ensue, and is not strictly restrained to outward means, is scandalous and fit to be dragged from Christian *theology*. God says, "What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done?" Isa 5.4. But the expression plainly has a double limitation:

(1*st*.) It is limited to the *use of outward means* only, which God speaks of in that place, and from which he elsewhere plainly distinguishes his *giving*

them a new heart and *a new spirit*, so they will all know him and all be taught by him.

(2*dly*.) It is limited to the *use of those outward means* that were *then established*, as the only way for that season. For even in respect to those means, he did *more for his vineyard* when he granted the gospel to it.

But is it possible that any man thinks or believes that God cannot really *collate* [6] *grace* and mercy on the souls of men when he pleases? Is it not as easy for him, upon our restoration by Christ, to implant *habits of grace* in our souls, as it was at first to create us in *original rectitude* and righteousness? Therefore, though we may question what God *does* and *has done* in this matter, as he has revealed it in his word, to say that he does in anything only *what lies in him*, even though the things which he affirms he will do are not effected, is defective both in truth and piety. When he says he has done such a thing, or that he will do it, for us to then say, "No, he has not done it, or he will not do it; but he has done or will do only *what lies in him*, that it may be so, though it never is so, nor has been so" — is to make him altogether like ourselves. But on this ground, some pretend that the *Son of God is said to have given men understanding*, because he has done what is *requisite on his part*, in the declaration of the gospel, that we may have it, whether we ever have it or not. [7] But —

(1*st*.) What he is said to *have done*, he had at least a design to do; and if he had such a design, then why does it not take effect? "It is," they say, "because of the *unwillingness of men to turn to him*, and other *vicious habits* of their minds, which hinder them from receiving instruction." But if this is so, then —

[1*st*.] It is supposed that men in their teachings can *give us an understanding* as well as the Son of God; for they may teach men the

knowledge of the gospel if they are *willing to learn*, and if they have no darling lusts or *vicious habits* of mind to hinder them from learning.

[2*dly*.] Seeing that he has taken this work on himself, and designs its accomplishment, cannot the *Son of God by his grace* remove those *vicious habits* of the minds of men, so that they may understand these things? If he *cannot*, why does he take upon himself what he cannot effect? If he *will not*, why does he promise to do what can never be done without doing what he will not do? And why is he said to do (as he is, according to this interpretation of the words) that which he has not done, and which he will not or cannot do?

(2*dly*.) *Giving an understanding*, in this place, is plainly distinguished from the *proposition of the things to be understood*; it consists in an ability to comprehend and know the doctrine of the gospel.

(3*dly*.) Again, the words used here, of *giving understanding*, may indeed express the actings or operations of men towards others, when what is intended is an external proposal of things to be understood, with the due use of means. Yet, if under their *teaching*, men do not *learn* or comprehend the things in which they are instructed, then these teachers cannot properly be said to have *given them an understanding of them*, with respect to their moral operation to that end; they have only *endeavored* to do so. But when this phrase of speech is used to express a *divine* operation — which doubtless may be really *physical*, and so absolutely efficacious — to then interpret it as concerning an *endeavor* that may or may not succeed, is not suitable to those thoughts which become us concerning divine operations. Nor was there any reason why the apostle should *emphatically* assign this work to "the Son of God" — and do that *as* he is "the true God and eternal life" — if no more is intended than a work of the same nature and kind as

what a man might do. If this were the sense of the words, then it is from *ourselves*, and not from the *Son of God*, that there is any truth in those words as to giving understanding. For it seems *he might do what lies in him to give understanding*, and yet no one in the world ever has an understanding of the nature intended. For if it may be so with any *one* to whom he is said to give an understanding, as it professedly is with most (who have none), then it may be so with *all*. Not to further debate these things at present, but so excellent a grace and mercy towards the souls of men is expressly attributed here to the Son of God as its author — namely, that he *gives us an understanding that we may know him which is true* — that I cannot think the Scripture is interpreted to his glory by those whose exposition of this passage consists in nothing but endeavors to prove that, indeed, he does not give such an understanding.

[4.] The Spirit's work is expressed by *teaching, leading, and guiding into the truth*, Joh 6.45, 16.13, 1Joh 2.20, 27; — these verses have been explained before. And two things are supposed in this expression of *teaching:*

1*st. A mind capable of instruction, leading, and conduct*. The nature must be *rational*, and able to comprehend the means of instruction which can be so *taught*. Therefore, we not only grant in this the use of the rational faculties of the soul, but we require their *exercise* and utmost improvement. If God *teaches*, we are to *learn*; and we cannot learn except in the exercise of our minds. It is pretended in vain that God's communication of a supernatural ability to our minds, and our exercise of them in a way of duty, *are inconsistent*, because indeed they are *inseparable* in all that we are taught by God. For at the same time that he *infuses a gracious ability* into our minds, he proposes the truth to us on which that ability is to be

exercised. And if these things are inconsistent, the whole real efficacy of God in the souls of men must be denied — which is to rob him of his sovereignty. But we speak now of natural ability to receive instruction, to be taught, with the exercise of this ability in learning. For these are assumed in the expression of the communication of a spiritual ability by *teaching*.

2*dly. A teaching* suited to that ability is promised or asserted. Three ways of this teaching are pleaded:

(1*st*.) Some say it consists in a *Theopneustia*, [8] *an immediate infallible inspiration and afflatus*, of the same nature as that of the prophets and apostles of old. But,

[1*st*.] This would remove the distinction between the *extraordinary* and *ordinary gifts* of the Spirit, so fully asserted in the Scripture, as we will declare elsewhere. And if it were so, God did not place in the church "some prophets," seeing that *all* were prophets, and were always to be so.

[2*ndly*.] It brings in a neglect of the Scripture, and levels it to the same state and condition as the conceptions of everyone who would pretend to this *inspiration*.

[3*dly*.] The pretense visibly confutes itself in the manifold mutual contradictions of those who pretend to it; and upon that,

[4*thly*.] It would be a principle, first of confusion, then of infidelity, and so lead to atheism.

[5*thly*.] The *prophets* themselves did not have the knowledge and understanding of the mind and will of God which we inquire after by their *immediate inspirations.* To them, these were like the written word to us; but they had it by the same means as we have it, 1Pet 1.10-11. [9] Hence they so frequently and fervently *prayed for understanding*, as we have seen in the instance of David. Therefore,

(2*dly*.) Some say this *teaching* consists only in the outward preaching of the word, in the ministry of the church and other external means of its application to our minds. But there is not one of the testimonies insisted on, in which this promised *teaching of God* is not distinguished from the proposition of the word in its outward dispensation, as was proved.

Besides, everyone who enjoys this teaching (that is, who is taught by God) really believes and comes to Christ by it: Joh 6.45, "It is written in the prophets, And they will all be taught by God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned from the Father, comes to me," says our blessed Savior. But it is not, nor ever was this way with all those towards whom the most powerful and cogent means of outward instruction are or have been used. Therefore,

(3*dly*.) This teaching is an *internal work of the Spirit*, giving light, wisdom, understanding, to our minds. So it is spoken of and promised in a special manner, distinct from the outward work of the dispensation of the word, and all the efficacy of that word singly considered. One testimony will serve this purpose, which has been pleaded and vindicated already. It is by an *unction* that we are thus *taught*, 1Joh 2.20, 27. [10] But the unction consists in a real communication of supernatural gifts and graces, of which *supernatural light* is particularly necessary to this end. The communication of them all, in all fullness, to Jesus Christ the head of the church, was *his unction*, Heb 1.9; Isa 61.1. [11] Therefore, our unction consists in the real sharing of them, in our measure, by which we are taught.

It is granted that this teaching is such that it *regards our own industry* in the use of means appointed to this end, so that we may know the mind of God in the Scripture. Yet it is such that it includes an *inward effectual operation* of the Holy Spirit, concomitant with the outward means of

teaching and learning. When the eunuch read the prophecy of Isaiah, he affirmed that he *could not understand it* unless someone *guided* him. Upon this, Philip explained the Scripture to him. But it was the Holy Ghost that opened his heart so that he might understand it; for so he opened the heart of Lydia, without which she would not have understood the preaching of Paul, Acts 16.14. [12] Therefore, in our learning, under the conduct or teaching of the Spirit, the utmost diligence in the exercise of our own minds is required of us. And where men are defective in this, they are said to be, Heb 5.11, "dull of hearing," [13] or slow in the improvement of the instruction given to them. It is a senseless thing to imagine that men would be diverted from the *exercise* of the faculties of their minds, merely because they are *enabled* to use them to good purpose or successfully, which is the effect of this internal teaching.

[5.] It is expressed *by shining into our hearts*: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2Cor 4.6. Jesus Christ is the "image of the invisible God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." And that is because of the illustrious representation of all divine excellencies that is made both in his person and in his mediation. The person of the Father is the eternal fountain of infinitely divine glorious perfections; and they are all communicated to the Son by eternal generation. All of them are *essentially* in his person as the Son of God, *absolutely*; they are *substantially* in his person as God-man, as vested with his offices, in opposition to all types and shadows; and they are *accidentally* in the mirror of the gospel, by revelation — *really*, but not *substantially* — for Christ himself is the body, the substance of all. He is represented to us in the mirror of the gospel as the *image of God*; and in this

are we called to behold the glory of God in him, 2Cor 3.18. The meaning is that the truth and doctrine concerning Jesus Christ, his person and mediation, is so delivered and taught in the gospel, that the glory of God is eminently represented by it; or what we are to know of God, his mind and will, is revealed in this gospel, as he is declared by and in Jesus Christ. But why is it, then, that all to whom the gospel is preached do not thus behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? Or why is it that all to whom the gospel is preached or declared do not apprehend and understand the truth, and reality, and glory, of the things revealed or proposed? — that is, why do they not understand the mind and will of God as revealed in the gospel? The apostle assigns two reasons for this:

1*st*. From what *hinders* understanding in many;

2*dly*. From what is *necessary* for anyone, that they may understand:

1*st*. The first is the *efficacy of the temptations and suggestions of Satan*, by which their minds are filled with prejudices against the gospel and its doctrine. Being blinded by these, they can see nothing of beauty and glory in it; so they certainly do not rightly apprehend it: 2Cor 4.4, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This is acknowledged by all to be an obstacle against the right understanding of the gospel. Unless the mind is freed from those *prejudices* which are the effects of such *blinding efficacy* of the suggestions of Satan, men cannot attain to the true knowledge of the mind of God in this. We will show afterward how these prejudices are removed. But if the mind is free, or freed from them, then it is assumed by some that there is need of no more than the due exercise of the mind's faculties, with diligence for that end; nor

is anything else required for it. It is true, in the ordinary dispensation of divine grace, this *is* required of us; but the apostle adds —

2*dly*. That there must be, moreover, a *divine light shining into our hearts*, to enable us for this; — at least, he adds that this was granted to those who *then believed*. And if we do not have it as they did, then I fear we do not believe in the same manner as they did. Therefore, although there is in the gospel and its doctrine, an illustrious representation of the glory of God in Christ, we are not able to discern it of ourselves until, by an act of his almighty power, the Holy Spirit *irradiates* our minds, and implants a light in them suited to this. Someone who does not behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" in the gospel, does not understand the mind and will of God as revealed in this, in a due manner. I suppose this will be granted, seeing that both these things are but one and the same, variously expressed. But we cannot do this of ourselves; for there is an internal work of God upon our minds that is necessary to this. This too is expressed in the words used. It is his *shining* into our hearts to give the light of this knowledge to us. There is a light in the gospel, "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ," 2Cor 4.4; but there must be a *light also in our hearts*, or we cannot discern it.[14] And this is no natural light, or a light that is common to all. But it is a light that, by way of grace, is given to those who believe. And it is worked in us by the same kind of efficiency as God *created light* with, at the beginning of the world — namely, by a productive act of power. It is evident, therefore, that the *light in our hearts* which God communicates to us so that we may have the true knowledge of his mind and will in the gospel, is distinct from that *light of truth* which is in the gospel itself. The one is *subjective*, the other is *objective* only; the one is

worked in us, the other is proposed to us; the one is an act of divine power in us, the other is an act of divine grace and mercy towards us.

There are other ways by which this operation of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds is expressed. The instances given and testimonies considered are sufficient for our purpose. What we are proving is that there is more required for a useful apprehension and understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture, than the mere *objective proposal* of it to us, and our diligent use of outward means to come to the knowledge of it. Yet, as we will show, this is from the Holy Spirit also. The denial of this, by just consequence, voids the *principal means* by which we may come to such an understanding — namely, frequent and fervent prayers for the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit. So too, no tolerable account can be given of the mind of God and the meaning of the Scripture in the passages insisted on.

And certainly, if we cannot understand the way and manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit in this, it would be much better to *captivate our understanding to the obedience of faith*, than to wrest [15] and pervert the Scripture, or debase the spiritual sense of it, in order to comply with our own conceptions and apprehensions. But we have in this the testimony of those that believe, in their own experience, who both value and acknowledge this grace and privilege to the glory of God. We have multiple instances of those who are destitute of that skill which would enable them to make use of assorted external means — means which are of great advantage in their proper place. Yet by virtue of this *divine teaching*, they are wise in the things of God beyond what some others with all their skill can attain to.

(2.) Moreover, the *effect* of this work of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, evidences what its *nature* is. And this too is variously expressed; such as —

[1.] It is called *light*: "You were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in the Lord," Eph 5.8. The introduction of light into the mind is the proper effect of illumination. Men in their natural estate are said to be *darkness* — the *abstract* for the *concrete — to* express how deeply the mind is affected with it. For as our Savior says, "If the light that is in you is darkness" (as it is in those who are "*darkness*"), "how great is that darkness!" Mat 6.23. Men are subject to be mistaken in this, supposing (as the Pharisees did) that they see, when they are blind. He therefore gives this caution: "Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in you is not darkness," Lk 11.35. For men are apt to please themselves with the working and improvement of their natural light, which in its issue will prove to be but darkness with respect to spiritual things. And while they are under the power of this darkness — that is, while their minds are deeply affected with their natural ignorance — they *cannot perceive spiritual things*, 1Cor 2.14, not even when they are most evidently proposed to them. For although "the light shines in darkness," or casts its beams in the evidence and glory of spiritual truth, "the darkness comprehends it not," Joh 1.5. But by this work of the Holy Spirit, we are made "light in the Lord." Light in the mind is a spiritual ability to discern and know spiritual things, as declared in 2Cor 4.6. [16] This is bestowed on us and communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. There is a real difference between light and darkness; and it is our minds that are affected with them, Lk 11.35. Removal of the one and the introduction of the other, are things that are not absolutely in our own power: the one who is "darkness" cannot make himself "light in the Lord."

Whatever he may do by way of disposition or preparation, by way of duty and diligence, in the utmost improvement of the natural faculties of his mind, no man will ever rise to it under the power of this darkness, because of the insuperable prejudices and corrupt affections it fills the mind with. Yet the *introduction of this light* is an act of Him who opens the eyes of our understandings and shines into our hearts. Without this *light*, no man can understand the Scripture as he should. I will not argue about what those who are in darkness see or behold.

The expulsion of *spiritual darkness* out of our minds, and the introduction of *spiritual light* into them, is an effect of the immediate power of the Spirit of God. It is a work so great that those who were "darkness," whose "light was darkness," are made "light in the Lord" by it. To ascribe other low and *metaphorical* senses to the words, is to corrupt the Scripture, and to deny the testimony of God. For he produces this *light* in us by the same power, and the same manner of operation, by which he brought light out of darkness at the creation of all things. It is by this way and means alone, that we attain the "knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2Cor 4.6 or the revelation of his mind and will in the gospel.

[2.] It is called *understanding*. So the psalmist prays, "Give me understanding, and I will keep your law," Psa 119.34. So the apostle speaks to Timothy, "Consider what I say; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things," 2Tim 2.7. Besides his own *consideration* of what was proposed to him, which includes the due and diligent use of all outward means, it was moreover necessary that *God should give him understanding* by an inward effectual work of his Spirit, so that he might comprehend the things in which he was instructed. And the desire for this, as that without which there can be no saving knowledge of the word, nor any advantage by

it, the psalmist expresses *emphatically*, and with great fervency of spirit, in Psa 119.144, "The righteousness of your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I will live." Without this he knew that he could have no benefit by the everlasting righteousness of the testimonies of God. All understanding, however it is abused by most, is indeed the work and effect of the Holy Ghost, for "the inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding," Job 32.8. So this is *spiritual* understanding, in a special manner. And included in this "understanding" is both the ability of our mind, and the due exercise of it. That the saints of God have prayed with so much earnestness that God would *give them understanding of his mind and will* as revealed in the word, along with His reiterated promises that he would so do, have more weight with me than all the disputes of men to the contrary. There is no further argument necessary to prove that men do not understand the mind of God in the Scripture in a due manner, than their supposition and confidence that they can do so without the communication of a *spiritual understanding* to them by the Holy Spirit of God — which is so contrary to the Scripture's plain, express testimonies.

[3.] It is called *wisdom*; for by this work on the minds of men they are rendered "*wise* unto salvation." 2Tim 3.15 So the apostle prays for the Colossians, "that God would fill them with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," Col 1.9. These things may be the same, and the latter be *exegetical* of the former. If there is a difference, "wisdom" respects things in general, in their whole system and *complex*; "understanding" respects particulars as they are to be reduced to practice. Therefore, the "*spiritual* understanding" which the apostle prays for, respects the mind of God in special or particular places of the Scripture; and "*wisdom*" is a skill and ability in the comprehension of the whole system of

his counsel as revealed in it. The one who is thus made *wise*, and he alone, can *understand* the things of God as he should.[17] Men may pride themselves on their learning, natural abilities, fruitful inventions, tenacious memories, various fancies, plausibility of expression, with long study and endeavors — things that are good and praiseworthy in their kind and order. And yet, unless they are *made wise* by the Spirit of God, they will scarcely attain a due acquaintance with God's mind and will. For this *effect* of that work is also expressly called "knowledge."[18] Thus, without this, we cannot have what is properly called knowledge.[19]

This is the second thing designed in this discourse. In the first it was proved in general that there is an *effectual operation of the Spirit of God on the minds of men*, enabling them to perceive and understand the supernatural revelations of the Scripture when it is proposed to them. And in the second it was declared what the *nature of that work* is, and what its effects are on our minds. I have treated both of them merely from Scripture testimony. For we would seek in vain any other way or means for what we ought to apprehend and believe in this. Nor is the force of these testimonies to be eluded by any distinctions or *evasions* whatsoever. Nor, while the authority of the Scripture is allowed, can any men more effectively evidence the weakness and depravation of their *reason*, than by contending that in exercising it, they can understand the mind and will of God as revealed in this Scripture, without the special aid and illumination of the Spirit of God. Nor can any man, on that supposition, and with any wisdom or consistency in his own principles, make use in a way of duty, of the principal means by which we may so understand them. This will more fully appear afterward.

1. Originally, "perfect enthusiasms."
2. **Act 26:17** 'I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, [18] 'to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'
3. **1Cor 1:23** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, [24] but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **1Cor 2:14** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.
4. Mat 22.37; Mark 12.30; Luke 10.27; Eph 1.18, 2.3, 4.18; Col 1.21; Heb 8.10; 1Pet 1.13; 2Pet 3.1.
5. The phrase "what lies in him" means "to the extent he is able to do it." Or, "God will do what He can," as though He has limitations, and cannot effect His will in the world. Owen condemns this view of God.
6. *Collate*: to confer or bestow on someone.
7. This is Owen's denunciation of Arminianism, in which Christ's sacrifice only made men salvable, but actually saved no one, even though he intended to save all. He did what he could to save us, "what lies in him," but the outcome is left in our hands.
8. θεοπνευστία – 2Tim 3.16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (*Theopneustos*).

9. **1Pet 1:10** Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, [11] searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.
10. **1Joh 2:20** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. **1Joh 2:27** But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.
11. **Heb 1:9** Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." **Isa 61:1** "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;
12. **Act 16:14** The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.
13. νωθροὶ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς – *noothroi tais akoais*.
14. Today, we might use the example of a black light (UV rays), whose lighted objects can't be seen without special lenses.
15. *Wrest*: To twist, pervert, distort.
16. . **2Cor 4:6** For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
17. **Dan 12:10** "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. **Hos 14:9** Who *is* wise? Let him understand these things. *Who is* prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD *are*

right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them. **Psa 107:43** Whoever *is* wise will observe these *things*, And they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

18. **Col 1:9** For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the **knowledge** of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **2Cor 4:6** For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. **Eph 1:17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the **knowledge** of Him; **Col 3:10** and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in **knowledge** according to the image of Him who created him;

19. That is, without this wisdom imparted by the Spirit of God, we cannot have its effect, which is knowledge of God.

Chapter V. Causes of ignorance of the mind of God

Causes of being ignorant of the mind of God revealed in the Scripture, and of errors about it — What they are, and how they are removed.

The supposition we proceed on in this discourse is that *God has revealed his mind and will to us in the holy Scripture, as to all things concerning his worship, with our faith and obedience in it*. Upon having that, we inquire by what means we may attain *saving knowledge* of the mind of God, that is so revealed. And my principal design is to show what *aid and assistance* we receive from the Holy Ghost to that end. To further us in the knowledge of this, I will inquire into the *causes and reasons of men's ignorance* and misapprehensions of the mind of God, as revealed, and how our minds are delivered from them.

It may be that this part of our discourse might have had a more proper place assigned to it, after we have given a fuller confirmation of the truth pleaded. But because an objection may arise against the truth contended for, from the consideration of what we will now assert, I thought it was not

amiss to obviate it so as to further illustrate the doctrine itself which we labor in.

All men see, and most men complain of, that ignorance of the mind of God, and those abominable errors, attended with false worship, which abound in the world. How few there are who rightly understand and believe the truth! It is likewise known what *divisions*, *scandals*, *animosities*, *violence*, mutual rage and persecutions, ensue from this among those who are called Christians. Hence some take occasion to countenance themselves in an open declension to *atheism*; some to a great *indifference* in all religion; some to advance themselves and destroy others by the advantage of their opinions, according to their prevalence in some times and places. A brief inquiry into the causes of that *darkness* and *ignorance* which is in the world, among men who outwardly own the doctrine of the gospel, and especially of the *errors* and *heresies* which abound above what they have been in most ages, may be of use to preserve us from those evils. This is a subject that would require much time and diligence to handle it in a due manner. At present, I intend only to point at the *heads of a few things*, the observation of which may be of use for the end designed.

Those of the Roman church tell us that the cause of this is the *obscurity, difficulty, and perplexity of the Scripture*. "If men will trust to this as their only guide, they are sure to miscarry." Therefore, they say, the only relief in this matter is that we surrender our souls to the *conduct of their church*, which can neither err nor deceive.

Indeed, so said Adam of old, when charged with his sin and infidelity: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." Gen 3.12 But though it is an evil (indeed the greatest of evils) whose causes we inquire about, it seems generally more rational that we seek the

causes in *ourselves*, rather than in anything God has done; for he alone is good, and we are evil.

It is granted that God has given us his word, or the holy Scripture, as a declaration of his mind and will. And therefore he has given it to us for this very end and purpose: that we may know them and do them. But because many men fail in this, and do not rightly understand what is revealed, but fall into pernicious errors and mistakes to his dishonor and their own ruin, is it fitting to say to God that this comes to pass because the revelation he made of these things is *dark, obscure, and intricate*? Or, "The Scripture which you have given us deceives us?" Would a due reverence or deference to the wisdom, goodness, and love of God toward mankind, be preserved in this?

"Men, ready for anything, are quick to find forbidden wickedness." [1]

What will the prejudices and corrupt interests of men not carry them to! God will forever preserve those who are His in abhorrence of that religion, whatever it is, that by any means leads us to undervalue that revelation of himself which, in infinite wisdom and goodness, he has made to us.

But is it because there is *no reason* to be given for this evil, from the minds of men themselves, that it is thus ascribed to God? May not all the wickedness that the world is filled with, be as well ascribed to him and what he has done? Does not each one see a *sufficient cause* for this in himself, if he were not delivered from it by the power of the Spirit and grace of God? Do not other men who fail in the right knowledge of God, especially in any important truth, sufficiently evidence in other things, that the root of this matter is in themselves? Alas! How dark the minds of poor mortals are, how full of pride and folly! I say with some confidence, that there is reason enough to charge all the errors, ignorance, and confusions in religion, that

are or ever were in the world, *on the minds of men*, and on those depraved affections whose prevalence they are liable to. And this is without the least censure of obscurity, insufficiency, or intricacy in the Scripture. Those who do not understand this, are themselves profoundly ignorant of the state of all things above and here below.

We must therefore inquire after the causes and reasons of these things among ourselves; for only there will they be found. And these causes are of two sorts:

1. *That which is general*, and the spring of all others;

2. *Those which are particular*, which arise and branch out from there:

1. The first and general cause of all ignorance, error, and misunderstanding of the mind and will of God, as revealed in the Scripture — which exist among all sorts of men, whatever their particular circumstances — is the *natural vanity and darkness with which the minds of all men are depraved*. I fully declared elsewhere the nature of this depravation of our minds by the fall, and its effects. Therefore, I now take it for granted that the minds of all men are naturally prepossessed with this darkness and vanity, from which they are not and cannot be delivered, except by the saving illumination of the Spirit and grace of God. But because I have so largely addressed it both in the "Discourses of the Dispensation of the Spirit," book iii. chap. iii., [2] and those concerning the Apostasy of these latter times, [3] I will not insist on it again.

I will observe only two things for our present purpose, namely —

(1.) *That by this, the mind is kept from discerning the glory and beauty of spiritual, heavenly truth*, and from being sensible of its power and efficacy, Joh 1.5. [4]

(2.) That by the same means, it is *inclined toward all things that are vain, curious, superstitious, and carnal*, suited to the interest of pride, lust, and all manner of corrupt affections. Hence, whatever other occasions of error and superstition may be given or taken, the basis of their receipt, and of all adherence to them, is the *uncured vanity and darkness* of the minds of men by nature. This is the mire in which this rush grows.

And considering this, will rectify our thoughts concerning those we see daily who *wander from the truth*, or who live in those misapprehensions of the mind of God which they have imbibed, notwithstanding the clear revelation of it to the contrary. Some think it strange that it should be this way, and marvel at them; some are angry with them; and some would persecute and destroy them. We may make better use of this consideration; for we may learn from it the *sad corruption and depravation of our minds in our estate of apostasy from God*. Here lies the seed and spring of all the sin, evil, and disorder, which we behold and suffer under in religious concerns in this world. And if we consider it rightly, it will serve —

[1.] To impress *a due sense of our own condition upon our minds*, so that we may be humbled; in *humility* alone there is safety. "His soul which is proud is not upright in him," Hab 2.4; for he *draws back from God*, and God has no pleasure in him, as the apostle expounds those words in Heb 10.38. It was in the principles of our nature to adhere sacredly to the *first truth, to* discern and abhor every false way.

We were created with that *light of truth* in our minds that was in every way able to guide us in all that we had to believe or do with respect to God, or to our own blessedness forever. But in place of this, through our wretched *apostasy from God*, our mind has become the seat and habitation of all vanity, disorder, and confusion. And in no way does this more reveal

itself than in the readiness and proneness of multitudes to embrace whatever is crooked, perverse, and false in religion, notwithstanding the *clear revelation* that God has made in the Scripture, of the whole truth concerning it. A due reflection on this may teach us *humility* and self-abasement; for we are "by nature children of wrath, even as others;" Eph 2.3 nor do we have any good thing that we have not received.1Cor 4.7 It is better, therefore, to be conversant with such thoughts on this occasion, than to be filled with *contempt of*, or *wrath against*, those whom we see still suffering under those woeful effects of the general *apostasy* from God, in which we were equally involved with them. Indeed —

[2.] It will teach us *pity and compassion* towards those whose minds run into the spiritual excesses mentioned. The merciful High priest of the whole church has "compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way," Heb 5.2; and it is conformity to him in all things which ought to be our principal design, if we desire to be like him in glory. Lack of this is the ruin of religion, and the true cause of all the troubles that its profession is encumbered with at this day.

It is true for the most part, that there is an interposition of corrupt affections seducing the minds of men from the truth; they are tossed up and down with these, and so they are driven with the winds of temptations that befall them. But is it *humanity* to stand on the shore, and seeing men in a *storm* at sea, in which at any moment they are liable to be cast adrift and perish, to *storm* at them ourselves, or to shoot them to death, or to throw fire into their vessel, because they are in danger of being drowned? Yet we deal no differently with those whom we persecute because they miss the knowledge of the truth. And it may be that we raise a worse *storm* in ourselves as to our own *morals*, than they suffer under in their *intellectuals*.

Concerning such persons, the advice of the apostle is this: "On some have compassion, making a distinction: but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," Jude 1.22-23. Some are so given up in their apostasy that they "sin unto death;" we are not to concern ourselves with such, 1Joh 5.16. But it is very rare that we can safely make that judgment concerning anyone in this world; though sometimes, no doubt, we may, or this rule concerning them would never have been given.

As to all others — the worst of them, those who *are in the fire* — the frame of our minds' acting towards them is presented to us here: we ought to be possessed with and moved by *compassion* for their present state, and *fear* of their future ruin. But how few are those who are so framed and minded towards them, especially to those who by their enormous errors seem to be fallen into the fire of God's displeasure! Men think that anger, wrath, fury, and contempt are their duty towards such persons; there is usually more contriving as to how they may be *temporally destroyed* than how they may be *eternally saved*. But such men profess the truth by chance, as it were. They never knew what it means to learn truth rightly, nor from where the knowledge of it is to be received, nor were they ever under its power or conduct. Our proper work is to s*ave such persons*, as we are able, "pulling them out of the fire." Jude 1.23 Duties of difficulty and danger to ourselves may be required for it. If we had secular power with us, it would be easier to throw men into *temporal fire* for their errors, than to free them from *eternal fire* by the truth. But if we were governed by compassion for their souls and fear for their ruin, as it is our duty to be, then we would not decline any office of love required for it.

[3.] Has God *led us into the truth*, has he kept us from every false way? — it is evident that we have abundant cause for gratitude and fruitfulness. It

is a condition more desperate than that of the most pernicious errors, to "hold the truth in unrighteousness;" and as good not to know the Lord Jesus Christ, as to be barren in the knowledge of him. We see that it is not of *ourselves* that we know the truth, or love it, or abide in the profession of it. We have nothing of this kind but what we have received.[1Cor 4.7] *Humility* in ourselves, *usefulness* towards others, and *thankfulness to* God, ought to be the effects of this consideration.

This is the first general cause of men's misapprehension of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture. The revelation itself is plain, perspicuous, and full of light; but this "light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not." The natural darkness and blindness which is in the minds of men, with the vanity and instability which attend them, causes them to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. And for this sort of men to complain of the obscurity of the Scripture, as they do horribly in the *Papacy*, is the same as if a company of blind men were to cry out about an *eclipse of the sun* when he shines in his full strength and glory. How this darkness is removed and taken away by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit in our illumination, I have discussed at large elsewhere.

2. *Corrupt affections*, prevalent in the minds of men, hinder them from a right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture. For hereby they are effectively inclined to wrest and pervert the truth, or are filled with prejudices against it. This is the next cause of all ignorance and error, where we must seek the particular causes of them that were proposed before. The principal reason why most men do not attain a right understanding of the mind and will of God in the Scripture, is the *corrupt affections* that are predominant in their own minds, by which they are exposed to all sorts of

impressions and seductions from Satan and the agents for his kingdom and interest. So one apostle tells us that "unlearned and unstable men wrest the Scripture, to their own destruction," 2Pet 3.16; and another, that these unlearned and unstable persons are "men of corrupt minds," 1Tim 6.5; 2Tim 3.8; — that is, those whose minds are particularly under the power of perverse and corrupt affections. For these affections are, Eph 2.3, "the wills of the mind," [5] which carry it with an impetuous inclination towards their own satisfaction, and render it obstinate and perverse in its adherence to this. These are the root of that "filthiness and overflow of wickedness" which must be cast out before we can "receive with meekness the ingrafted word," Jas 1.21. A few of them may be named:

(1.) *Pride, or carnal confidence in our own* wisdom and ability of mind for all the ends of our duty towards God, especially of understanding his mind and will, either keeps the souls of men under the bondage of darkness and ignorance, or it precipitates them into foolish apprehensions or pernicious errors. Just as spiritual pride is the worst sort of pride, so this is the worst degree of spiritual pride: namely, when men do not acknowledge God in these things as they should, but lean on their own understandings.[Pro 3.5] This is what ruined the Pharisees of old, that they could not understand the mind of God in anything to their advantage. It is the meek, the *humble*, the *lowly in mind*, those who are *like little children*, that God has promised to teach. This is an eternal and unalterable law of God's appointment, that whoever would learn His mind and will as revealed in the Scripture, must be *humble and lowly*, renouncing all trust and confidence in themselves. And whatever men of another frame come to know, they do not know it according to the mind of God, nor according to their own duty, nor to their advantage. Whatever *knowledge* they may have, however conspicuous it

may be made by their natural and *acquired abilities*, however it may be garnished with a mixture of secular literature, whatever contempt of others it may raise them to — such as the Pharisees had of the *people*, whom they esteemed *accursed because they did not know the law* — yet they know nothing as they should, nothing to the glory of God, nothing to the spiritual advantage of their own souls.

And of what account is their knowledge? Indeed, the knowledge of a proud man is the throne of Satan in his mind. To suppose that persons under the predominance of pride, self-conceit, and self-confidence, can understand the mind of God as revealed in a due manner, is to renounce the Scriptures, or innumerable positive testimonies given in them to the contrary. Such persons cannot make use of any one means of spiritual knowledge that God requires of them in a way of duty, nor can they improve to their good any one truth which they may know. Therefore, our Savior tells the proud Pharisees, notwithstanding all their skill in the letter and *tittles* of the Scripture, that "they had not heard the voice of God at any time, nor seen his shape, nor did they have his word abiding in them," Joh 5.37-38. They had no right knowledge of Him, as He had revealed and declared himself.

Men infected with this *leaven*, [6] having their minds tainted with it, have been the great corrupters of divine truth in all ages. Such have been the ringleaders of all *heresies*; and such were those who have turned the knowledge of the will of God proposed in the Scripture into a *wrangling science*, filled with niceties, [7] subtleties, curiosities, *futile terms of art*, and other fuel for the minds of fiery contenders in wrangling disputations.

And this kind of *self-confidence* is apt to befall all sorts of men. Those of the lowliest capacity may be infected with it no less than the wisest or most

learned. And we frequently see persons whose weakness in all sound knowledge, and insufficiency for the use of proper means for attaining it, might seem to call them to humility and lowliness of mind in an eminent manner. Yet they are lifted up to such a degree of spiritual pride and conceit of their own understandings, as to render them useless, troublesome, and offensive to men of sober minds. But principally exposed to this are those who either really or in their own apprehensions are *exalted above others* in secular learning, and natural or acquired abilities. For such men are apt to think that they must necessarily know the meaning of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures better than others, or at least that they can do so if they will only set themselves about it. But what principally hinders them from doing so, is their conceit that they *can* do so.

They mistake for divine knowledge, that which is the great obstruction to it in them.

(2.) The *love of honor and praise among men* is another corrupt affection of mind, of the same nature and efficacy as that named before. This is so branded by our Savior as an insuperable obstacle against the admission of sacred light and truth, that no more need be added to this. See Joh 5.44, 12.43. [8]

(3.) *A pertinacious*[9] *adherence to corrupt traditions and inveterate errors*, quite shuts the way to all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This ruined the church of the *Jews* of old, and at present it makes that of the Romanists incurable. What their forefathers have professed, what they themselves have imbibed from their infancy, what all their outward circumstances are involved in, what they have advantage by, what gains a reputation with those in whom they are principally concerned — that will be the *truth* with them, and nothing else. To persons whose minds are

wholly vitiated with the leaven of this corrupt affection, there is not a line in the Scripture whose sense can be truly and clearly represented; it all appears to support and represent what their prejudices frame in their minds. When the Lord Christ first came forth to preach the gospel, a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him," Mat 3.17, 17.5. Nor was this command given to those alone who heard it immediately from the "excellent glory," as Peter says, 2Pet 1.17 — but as recorded in the word, it is given equally to everyone who would learn anything of the mind and will of God in a due manner. No man can learn except by "hearing him;" we are sent to him for learning our spiritual knowledge. And in no other way does he speak to us than by his word and Spirit.

But where the minds of men are prepossessed with apprehensions of what they have received from the authority of other teachers, they have neither desire, design, readiness, nor willingness to hear *him*. But if men will not forego all pre-imbibed opinions, prejudices, and conceptions of mind — however riveted into them by traditions, custom, veneration of elders, and secular advantages — to hearken to and receive whatever the Spirit will speak to them, and do it with a humble, lowly frame of heart, then they will never learn the truth, nor attain a "full assurance of understanding" in the mysteries of God. These inveterate prejudices are at this day those which principally shut out the truth, and set men together by the ears [10] all over the world, about religion and its concerns. From this come all the strife, rage, tumult, and persecution that the world is filled with. If men could but once agree to lay down all those presumptions at the feet of Jesus Christ, which either wit, learning, custom, interest, or advantage have influenced them with, and resolve in sincerity to comply with that alone which he teaches

them, and forego whatever is inconsistent with it, then the ways to *truth and peace* would be more laid open than they are otherwise likely to be.

(4.) *Spiritual sloth* is of the same nature, and it produces the same effect. The Scripture frequently charges us to use the utmost of our diligence to *search* out and discover spiritual truth, proposing to us the example of those who have done so before. [11]

And any rational man would judge that if it had not been so expressly given us in charge from God himself, if it had not been a means appointed and sanctified to this end, the *nature of the thing* itself, with its importance to our duty and blessedness, are still sufficient to convince us of its necessity. It is *truth*, it is *heavenly truth*, that we inquire after; our eternal blessedness or misery depends on the knowledge or ignorance of that truth. And it is in a due perception of this alone, that the faculties of our minds are perfected according to the measure which they are capable of in this life. In this alone can the mind of man find rest, peace, and satisfaction. And without it, the mind must always wander in restless uncertainties and disquieting vanities. It is a notion implanted in the minds of all men that all *truth lies deep*, and that there is great difficulty in attaining it. The minds of most are imposed on by specious appearances of falsehood. Therefore, all wise men have agreed that *without our utmost care and diligence* in the investigation of the truth, we must be content to walk in the shades of ignorance and error. And if it is this way in earthly things, then how much more in heavenly! Just as spiritual, *supernatural truth* is to be valued incomparably above that which relates to natural things, so it is more abstruse and difficult to investigate.

But this folly has befallen the minds of most men: they suppose that of all things, there is least need to use pains and diligence in inquiring after those

things which *the angels themselves desire to bow down and look into*, and which *the prophets of old inquired and searched after with all diligence*. Whatever their notion of this may be, practically it is evident that most men, through *pride, sloth, and love of sin*, are wholly negligent in this. Or at least they will not apply themselves to those spiritual means without which the knowledge of *divine truth will* not be attained. It is generally supposed that men may be as wise in these things as they need to be, at a very easy rate. The folly of men in this can never be bewailed enough. They regard spiritual truth as if they had no concern in it, beyond what custom and tradition put on them, in reading chapters or hearing sermons. They are wholly under the power of sloth as to any means of spiritual knowledge.

Some, indeed, will labor diligently in the study of those things which the Scripture has in common with other *arts and sciences.* Such are the languages in which it was written, the stories contained in it, the ways of arguing which it uses with *scholastic accuracy*, in expressing the truth supposed to be contained in it. These things are great in themselves, but they go for nothing when they are alone.

Men under the utmost efficacy of *spiritual sloth* may be diligent in them, and make great progress in their improvement. But they are spiritual objects and duties that this sloth prevails to alienate the minds of men from, and to make them negligent of. What those duties are, I will afterward manifest.

The consideration, I say, of the state of things in the world, evidences a great probability that the number is very small of those who diligently, humbly, and conscientiously endeavor to learn the truth from the voice of God in the Scripture; or to grow wise in the mysteries of the gospel by those ways alone in which that wisdom is attainable. This comes about,

- through the *pride and self-conceit* of the minds of many, refusing to comply with the means of spiritual knowledge, and excluding all gracious qualifications indispensably required for attaining it;
- through *the power of corrupt traditions*, imprisoning the minds of men in a fatal adherence to them, preventing all thoughts of a holy, ingenuous inquiry into the mind of God by the only safe, infallible revelation of it;
- *through the power of spiritual sloth*, indisposing the minds of most to an immediate search of the Scripture — partly with apprehensions of its difficulty, and partly with notions of learning the truth contained in it by other means; and
- through a *traditional course of studying divinity* as an art or science, to be learned out of the writings of men.

Is it any wonder, then, if many, the greatest number of men, wander after vain imaginations of their own or others, while the truth is neglected or despised?

(5.) Again, there is in the minds of men by nature, a *love of sin*, which causes them to *hate the truth*; and none can understand it but those who love it. In the visible church, most men come to know of the truth of the gospel, whether they will to or not, as it were. And they find the general design of it to be a *separation between them and their sins*. This puts them at a distance from it in their affection; and on this, they can never make any near approach to the truth in knowledge or understanding. So we are assured, Joh 3.19-20: "Light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be reproved." Persons under the power of this frame, sit under shades of

ignorance and corrupt imaginations. And even if they were to attempt to learn the truth, they would never be able to do so.

(6.) Lastly, Satan by his temptations and suggestions, variously affects the minds of men, hindering them from discerning the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture: "The god of this world blinds the eyes of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them," 2Cor 4.4.

The ways and means by which Satan does so — the instruments which he uses, the artifices and methods which he applies to his ends, with his application [12] of himself to them, according to all occasions, circumstances, opportunities, and provocations, in great variety — would be worth our inquiring into; but we would digress too much from our present design.

I have but mentioned these things, as *instances* of the true and originating causes of the lack of understanding and misunderstanding, of the revelation of the mind of God in the Scripture. Many more of the same nature might be added to them, and their effectual operations be declared to the same end; but the mention of them here is only *occasional*, and as such it will not allow for further discussion. Yet it is by these and like depraved affections, that the *original darkness* and enmity of the minds of men against spiritual truth and all its mysteries, exert themselves; and from them proceed all the error, superstition, and false worship that the world is filled with.

While the minds of men are thus affected, they cannot understand and receive divine, spiritual truths in a due manner; and so they are ready and prone to embrace whatever is contrary to them. Therefore, if it is the work of the Spirit of God alone, in the renovation of our minds, to free them from the power of these *vicious, depraved habits*, and consequently from the advantages that Satan thereby has against them, there is a special work of

his that is necessary to enable us to learn the truth as we should. And for those who have no regard for these things — who suppose that in the study of the Scripture, all things come alike to all, to the clean and to the unclean, to the humble and the proud, to those who hate the garment spotted with the flesh and those who both love sin and live in it — they seem to know nothing of the design, nature, power, use, or end of the gospel.

The removal of these hindrances and obstacles, is the work of the Spirit of God alone; for —

1. He alone communicates that *spiritual light* to our minds which is the foundation of all our relief against these obstacles of and oppositions to a saving understanding of the mind of God.

2. In particular, he frees, delivers, and purges our minds from all those *corrupt affections* and prejudices which are partly inbred in them, and partly assumed by or imposed on them. For the artifice of Satan, in turning the minds of men from the truth, is by bringing them under the power of corrupt and vicious habits, which expel that frame of spirit which is indispensably necessary to those who would learn it. It is, indeed, our *duty* to so purify and purge ourselves. [13]

We ought to cast out "all filthiness and overflow of wickedness," that we may "receive with meekness the ingrafted word," Jas 1.21; to "purge ourselves from these things, that we may be vessels for honor, sanctified and fit for our Master's use, and prepared for every good work," 2Tim 2.21. If it is not this way with us, let the pride and folly of men pretend what they please, we cannot learn, know, or teach the mind of God as we should. We do not inquire what men may do without giving glory to God, or bringing any spiritual advantage to their own souls, seeing that it belongs only *equivocally* to Christian religion. But although it is our duty to thus purge

ourselves, it is by the grace of the Holy Spirit that we do so. Those who would exclude the efficacious operations of the Holy Ghost in anything, under a pretense of it being our own duty — or on the other hand, who would exclude the necessity of diligence in our duties, on the pretense that it is all of his grace and its efficacy — admit only half the gospel, and reject the other. The whole gospel asserts and requires them both, in every good act and work. Therefore, purging ourselves is not absolutely in the power of our natural abilities. For these corrupt affections possess and are predominant in the mind itself; and all its actings are suited to their nature and influenced by their power. Therefore, it can never free itself from them by its own native ability. But it is the work of this great Purifier and Sanctifier of the church, to free our minds from these corrupt affections and inveterate prejudices by which we are alienated from the truth, and by which we are inclined to false conceptions of the mind of God. Unless this is done, we will in vain think to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. See 1Cor 6.11; Tit 3.3-5; Rom 8.13; Eph 4.20-24. [14]

3. The Spirit implants in our minds *spiritual habits and principles*, contrary and opposite to those corrupt affections, and by which they are subdued and expelled. By Him our minds are made *humble, meek, and teachable*, through submission to the authority of the word, and a conscientious endeavor to conform ourselves to it.

It was always agreed that ordinarily, preparations are required for receiving divine illuminations; and in assigning them, many have been greatly deceived. Hence some, in the expectation of receiving *divine revelations*, have been imposed on by *diabolical delusions* which, by the working of their imaginations, they had prepared their minds to give an easy admission to. So it was among the heathen of old, who invented many

ways to this purpose, some of them horrid and dreadful; and so it still is with *all enthusiasts*. [15] But God himself has plainly declared what the *qualifications* are of those souls who are (or ever will be) fit to be made partakers of divine teachings. And these are (as frequently expressed) *meekness, humility, godly fear, reverence, submission of soul and conscience* to the authority of God, with a *resolve* and readiness for all that obedience which He requires of us, especially that which is internal, in the hidden man of the heart.

Maybe some will judge that when we assign these things as means or preparations for this, we wander far from the matter of our inquiry: namely, *how we may come to the knowledge of the mind of God in the Scripture*, or how we may rightly understand the Scripture. For although these are good things (and that cannot be denied),

"It is *ridiculous* to urge them as necessary to this end, or being of any use to attain it. Learning, arts, languages, sciences, with the rules of their exercise, and the advantage of *ecclesiastical dignity*, are the things that are of use in this, and they alone."

Ans. We acknowledge that most of these things, and various others of the same kind, are of great use to the end designed, in their proper place. And what the due use of them is, will be declared afterward. But we must not forego what the Scripture plainly instructs us in, and which the nature of the things themselves evidence to be necessary, in order to comply with [16] the arrogance and fancy of anyone, or to free ourselves from their contempt.

It is such an understanding of the Scripture, of the *divine revelation* of the mind of God in this, in which the spiritual illumination of our minds consists, and which we inquire after. It is that knowledge which is useful and profitable to the proper ends of the Scripture towards us, that which we

are taught by God, so that we may live to him. These are the ends of all true knowledge. See 2Tim 3.14-17. [17] And for this end, furnishing the mind with the graces mentioned before, is the best preparation. One who denies this, bids defiance to the gospel. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 1Pet 5.5 Whatever may be the parts or abilities of men, whatever diligence they may use in the investigation of the truth, whatever *disciplinary* knowledge they may attain by it, the Spirit of God never did nor ever will instruct *a proud, unhumbled soul* in the right knowledge of the Scripture, because it is a divine revelation. It is these gracious *qualifications alone* by which we may be enabled to "cast out all filthiness and overflow of wickedness," so as to "receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls." Jas 1.21

Our blessed Savior tells us, that "unless we are converted, and become like little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven," Mat 18.3. We cannot do so unless we become *humble, meek, tender, weaned from high thoughts of ourselves*, and purged from prejudices by corrupt affections. I do not value that knowledge which will not conduct us into the "kingdom of heaven," or which will be excluded from there.

So God has promised that "he will guide the meek in judgment; he will teach the meek his way. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he will show them his covenant." "What man fears the Lord? He will teach him in the way," Psa 25.9, 12, 14. And so we are plainly told that "evil men do not understand judgment; but those who seek the Lord understand all things," Pro 28.5.

Now all these graces by which men are made teachable, and capable of divine mysteries — so as to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, to understand the mind of God in the Scriptures — are worked in them by the Holy Spirit;

and these graces belong to his work upon our minds in our illumination. Without this work, the hearts of all men are fat, their ears are heavy, and their eyes are sealed, that they can neither hear, nor perceive, nor understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God.[Isa 6.10]

These things belong to the work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds in our illumination, or in his enabling us to rightly understand the mind of God in the Scripture. Various other instances might be given to the same purpose. Whoever is thus *graciously prepared* and disposed by him, will be taught in the knowledge of the will of God, so far as he is concerned to know it in point of duty, and abides in the ordinary use of outward means. So too there are various other things necessary to attain further useful degrees of this knowledge and understanding. I will treat those afterward.

1. "Audax omnia perpeti Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas." Horat. Od. lib. i. 3, 25.
2. See vol iii. of the author's works. — Ed. – see *Pneumatolgia*, Part I.
3. See vol. vii. of his works. — Ed. "The Nature of Apostasy," an exposition on Hebrews 6.4-6.
4. **Joh 1:5** And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
5. θελήματα τῶν διανοιῶν.
6. **Luk 12:1** In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first *of all*, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
7. *Niceties*: subtle differences in meaning, opinion or attitude.
8. **Joh 5:44** "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God? **Joh 12:43** for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.
9. *Pertinacious*: stubbornly persisting, refusing to give up.
10. The expression “to set people together by the ears” means to involve them in a quarrel; set them at variance with each other.
11. **Jos 1:8** "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. **Psa 1:2** But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. **Pro 2:2** So that you incline your ear to wisdom, *And* apply your heart to understanding; [3] Yes, if

you cry out for discernment, *And* lift up your voice for understanding, [4] If you seek her as silver, And search for her as *for* hidden treasures; [5] Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. [6] For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding; **Joh 5:39** "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. **1Pet 1:10** Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, [11] searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. [12] To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things which angels desire to look into.

12. *Application*: here, the act of appealing; e.g., in "applying" for a job, an appeal is made listing the benefits the applicant offers.

13. **2Cor 7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. **1Joh 3:3** And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

14. **1Cor 6:11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. **Tit 3:3** For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. [4] But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, [5] not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved

us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; **Rom 8:13** For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **Eph 4:20** But you have not so learned Christ, [21] if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: [22] that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, [23] and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, [24] and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

15. *Enthusiast* means a religious zealot – here it means someone filled more with emotional fervor than biblical truth.

16. *Comply with*: to be ceremoniously courteous to someone (to avoid offense); placate.

17. **2Tim 3:14** But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, [15] and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Chapter VI. The Scripture as a means of sacred illumination

The work of the Holy Spirit in the composing and disposal of the Scripture as a means of sacred illumination — The perspicuity of the Scripture for understanding the mind of God, declared and vindicated.

There is yet another part of the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to the *illumination* of our minds, which must also be inquired into. And this concerns the *Scripture* itself; for he has so given out and so disposed of this, that it should be a moral way or means for communicating *divine revelations* to the minds of men. For this also is an effect of his infinite wisdom and care of the church. Designing to enlighten our minds with the knowledge of God, he prepared apt instruments for that end. Therefore, what we will declare under this head of our discourse is that,

The Holy Spirit of God has prepared and disposed of the Scripture so that it might be a most sufficient and absolutely perfect way and means of communicating to our minds, that saving knowledge of God and his will which is needful that we may live to him, and come to the enjoyment of him in his glory.

And here various things must be observed.

First.[1] The Holy Spirit has not reduced and *disposed the doctrines or supernatural truths* in the Scripture *into any system, order, or method*. But the principal ones are disposed into such a method in our *catechisms* and *systems of divinity, creeds*, and *confessions of faith*. Because the doctrinal truths of the Scripture have a mutual respect to and dependence on one another, they may be disposed into such an order to help the understandings and memories of men. There is, indeed, in some of the epistles of Paul, especially that to the Romans, a methodical disposition of the most important doctrines of the gospel, and the best methods of our teaching are borrowed from there. But *in the whole Scripture*, there is no such thing aimed at. It is not distributed into *common places*, nor are all things concerning the same truth *methodically* disposed under the same head; but its contexture and frame are of quite another nature. From this consideration, some think they have an advantage to charge the Scripture with *obscurity*, and to maintain that it was never intended to be such a *revelation of doctrines* as to be the rule of our faith.

"If it had been so, the truths to be believed would have been proposed in some order to us, like a *creed* or *confession* of faith, so that we might at once have had a view of them and been acquainted with them; but because they are now left to be gathered out of a *collection of histories, prophecies, prayers, songs, letters* or *epistles*, such as the Bible is composed of, they are difficult to find, hard to understand, and never to be perfectly learned."

Doubtless, the way fancied would have been excellent if God had designed to effect in us only an *artificial* or *methodical faith* and obedience. But if we have a due regard for the *use of the Scripture* and the ends of God in this, there is no weight in this objection; for —

1. It is evident that the whole of it consists in the *advancement of men's own apprehensions* and imaginations against the will and wisdom of God. It is a sufficient reason to prove that this is the *absolutely best way* for the disposal of divine revelations, because God has made use of this and no other. Indeed, one is reported to have said that if he had been *present at the creation of the universe, he would have disposed some things into a better order than what they are in!* For "vain man would be wise, though he is born like the wild ass's colt." Job 11.12 Thoughts that the revelations of supernatural truths might have been *disposed of otherwise*, with respect to the end of God, than as they are in the Scripture, are no *wiser* or better. God does not put such value on men's *accurate methods* as men may imagine them to deserve; nor are they so subservient to His ends in the revelation of himself as men are apt to fancy.

Indeed, often when men have brought truths to the strictest *propriety of expression* (they suppose), they lose both their power and their glory. Hence the world is filled with so many *lifeless, sapless, graceless*, artificial declarations of divine truth in the s*choolmen* and others. We may sooner squeeze water out of a pumice-stone, than one drop of spiritual nourishment out of those. But how many millions of souls have received divine light and consolation, suited to their condition, in those *occasional occurrences* of truth which they meet with in the Scripture, which they would never have obtained in those "wise" *artificial disposals of them* which some men would fancy! Truths have their power and efficacy upon our minds, not only from *themselves*, but from their *posture* in the Scripture. There they are placed in such aspects towards, and in such *conjunctions* with one another, that their *influences* on our minds greatly depend on it. The one who would part with any one truth out of its proper place where the Holy Spirit has disposed and

fixed it, is no *wise man*, nor is he exercised in those things. The psalmist says of God's testimonies, that they are "the men of my counsel," Psa 119.24; and no man will choose a *counsellor* whose entire wisdom consists in *sayings* and *rules* cast into a certain *order and method*. He alone is a good *counsellor* who, out of the largeness and wisdom of his own heart and mind, can give advice according to all present occasions and circumstances. Such counsellors are the testimonies of God. Artificial methodizing of spiritual truths may make men ready in notions, cunning and subtle in disputations; but it is the Scripture itself that is able to "make us wise unto salvation." 2Tim 3.15

2. In writing and composing the holy Scripture, the Spirit of God had respect to the *various states and conditions of the church*. It was not given for the use of one age or one season only, but for all generations — a guide in faith and obedience from the beginning of the world to the end of it. And the state of the church was not always to be the same, either in light, knowledge, or worship. God had so disposed of things in the eternal counsel of his will, that it would be carried on to its perfect estate by various *degrees of divine revelation*. The revelation of his mind in the Scripture is subservient and suited to this, Heb 1.1. If all divine truths had been stated and fixed *in a system of doctrines* from the first, then the state of the church must always have been the same; which was contrary to the whole design of divine wisdom in those things.

3. Such a *systematic proposal of doctrines*, truths, or articles of faith as some require, would not have answered the great ends of the Scripture itself. All that can be supposed of benefit by it, is that it would lead us more easily into a *methodical comprehension* of the truths so proposed. But we may attain this, and yet not be rendered one jot more *like God* by it.

The principal end of the Scripture is of another nature. It is to produce faith, fear, obedience, and reverence of God in the minds of men — to make them holy and righteous. And for those who have various weaknesses, temptations, and inclinations to the contrary, these must be obviated and subdued by it. To this end, every truth is disposed of in the Scripture as it ought to be. If any expect that the Scripture should be written in respect to *opinions, notions*, and *speculations*, to render men *skilful* and cunning in them, or able to talk and dispute about *all things and about nothing*, they are mistaken. It is given to us to make us *humble, holy, and wise* in spiritual things; to direct us in our *duties*; to relieve us against *temptations*; to comfort us under *troubles*; to make us love God and live to him, in all that variety of circumstances, occasions, temptations, trials, and duties which we are called to in this world. To this end, there is a more glorious power and efficacy in one *epistle*, one *psalm*, one *chapter*, than in all the writings of men (though they have their use also). He that has not experienced this, is a stranger to the power of God in the Scripture. Sometimes the design and scope of the place, sometimes the related circumstances, but mostly that *spirit of wisdom and holiness* which evidences itself in the whole, effectively influences our minds. Indeed, sometimes an *occasional passage in a story*, a word or expression, will contribute more to excite faith and love in our souls than a volume of learned disputations. It does not *argue, syllogize*, or *allure* the mind; but *it enlightens, persuades, and constrains* the soul to faith and obedience. This is what it is prepared for and suited to.

4. The disposition of divine revelations in the Scripture is also *subservient to other ends* of the wisdom of God towards the church. Some of them may be named:

(1.) *To render useful and necessary the great ordinance of the ministry*. God has not designed to instruct and save his church by any one outward ordinance only. The ways and means of doing good to us, so that all may issue in his own eternal glory, are known to infinite wisdom only. The institution of the whole *series and complex* of divine ordinances is not to be accounted for other than by regard and submission to this. Who can deny that God might have instructed, sanctified, and saved us, without the use of *some* or *all* of those institutions which he has obliged us to? His *infinitely wise will* is the only reason for these things. And he will have every one of his appointments on which he has *put his name,* honored. Such is the *ministry*. As a means, this is not *coordinate* with the Scripture, but *subservient* to it. And the great end of it is that those who are called to this ministry, and are furnished with gifts for discharging it, might diligently "search the Scriptures," and teach others the mind of God revealed in it.

It was, I say, the will of God that the church should ordinarily be always under the conduct of such a *ministry*. And it is his will that those who are called to this ministry should be furnished with *specific spiritual gifts* for finding out and declaring the truths that are treasured up in the Scripture, to all the ends of divine revelation. See Eph 4.11-16; 2Tim 3.14-17.[2] The Scripture, therefore, is such a revelation that it supposes and makes necessary this ordinance of the ministry, in which and by which God will also be glorified. And it would be well if the *nature and duties* of this office were better *understood* than they seem to be. God has accommodated the revelation of himself in the Scripture with respect to its ministers. Those by whom the due discharge of this office is despised or neglected, sin greatly against the authority, wisdom, and love of God. And those by whom this office is assumed, but not rightly understood or duly improved, do no less.

But it may be objected,

"Why did *the Holy Ghost* not *dispose of all things so plainly in the Scripture that every individual person might have attained the knowledge of them without the use of this ministry*?"

I answer — It is a proud and foolish thing to inquire about any of the reasons for the ways and works of God antecedent to his own will. "He works all things according to the counsel of his own will," Eph 1.11; and we are to acquiesce in this. Yet we may see the wisdom of *what he has done*, in such as these —

1. He would glorify his own power, in working great effects by *vile, weak means*, 1Cor 3.7; 2Cor 4.7. [3]

2. He did it to magnify his Son Jesus Christ in the communication of *spiritual gifts*, Acts 2.33; Eph 4.8, 11, 12. [4]

3. To show that in and by the work of his grace, he did not design to destroy or contradict the faculties of our nature, which he created at first. He would work *on* them, and work a change *in* them, by means that are suited to their constitution and nature; this is done in the *ministry* of the word, 2Cor 5.18-20. [5]

(2.) The *disposition of the Scripture* respects the duty of all believers in the exercise of their faith and obedience. They know that all their light and direction, all their springs of spiritual strength and consolation, are treasured up in the Scripture. But in the unspeakable variety of their occasions, they do not know *where every particular provision for these ends* is stored. Hence it is their duty *to meditate upon the word day and night*; to "seek wisdom as for silver, and to search for it as for hidden treasures," so that they may "understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of

God," Pro 2.3-5. And this being a duty to which the exercise of all graces is required, they are all improved by it.

The soul which is hereby engaged to constant converse with God, will thrive more in that which is the proper end of the Scripture — namely, "the fear of the Lord," — than it could under any other kind of teaching.

(3.) *A continual search into the whole Scripture, without a neglect of any part of it*, is hereby rendered necessary. And hereby our souls are prepared on all occasions, and influenced in the whole course of our obedience. For the whole and every part of the word is blessed to our good, according to the prayer of our Savior, "Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth," Joh 17.17. There is power put forth in and by every part and parcel of it, to our sanctification. And there is such a distribution of useful *truths* throughout the whole, that everywhere we may meet with what is prepared for us and suited to our condition. To me, it is no small argument for the *divine origin of the Scripture*, and for God's presence in it, that there is no *thought of our hearts* with respect to the proper end of the Scripture — that is, to our living to God so as to come to the enjoyment of him — that we will not find, at one time or other, a due *adjustment* of our heart in it, in one place or another.

No *frame* can befall the hearts of believers as to spiritual things, whether it relates to their *thriving* or *decay*, unless there is a disposition of spiritual provision for it. Often, when we least look for it, we will then find it opening itself. *Powerful instructions, as to our practice*, often arise out of circumstances, occasional words, and expressions. All of this argues for an infinite wisdom in their provision, to which every future occurrence was in open view from eternity, and a present divine efficacy in the word's application of itself to our souls. How often, in reading it, we meet with and

are surprised, as it were, with *gracious words* that enlighten, quicken, comfort, endear, and engage our souls! How often we find sin wounded, grace encouraged, faith excited, love inflamed — and all this is done in that endless variety of inward frames and outward occasions which we are liable to! I will say with confidence that someone who is capable of fancying that divine revelations might have been disposed to more advantage with respect to living to God, was never acquainted with the *excellence of the Scripture*, with its power and efficacy, in any holy experience. And these things are sufficient to remove the objection mentioned before.

Secondly. The Holy Spirit has so disposed of the Scripture *that the mind of God in all things concerning our faith and obedience, in the knowledge of which our illumination consists, is clearly revealed in this*. No other argument is needed to prove that nothing *belongs* to our religion that is *not revealed* or appointed in the Scripture. No other argument is needed to prove that any truth that it is not *clearly revealed* in the Scripture, is not *indispensably necessary* to our faith or obedience.

But in this assertion we must take along with us these two suppositions:

1. That we look at and receive the Scripture *not as the word of men*, but indeed, *as the word of the living God*. We may be mistaken if we look for that *perspicuity* and *dearness* in the expression of divine revelation, which men endeavor to give to the declaration of their minds in natural things. They do this by artificial methods and order, by applying words and terms that are invented and disposed of on purpose, in order to accommodate what is said, to the common notions and reasonings of men. Nor would it have suited divine wisdom and authority to make use of such methods, ways, or arts. There is that *plainness* and *perspicuity* in the Scripture, which suit the holy, wise God to make use of; whose words are to be received with

reverence, with submission of mind and conscience to his authority, and with fervent prayer that we may understand his mind, and do his will. Thus all things are made plain to the lowliest capacity. Yet it is not so plain that, if the wisest and most learned do not see the characteristics of infinite divine wisdom on things that seem most obvious and most exposed to vulgar apprehension, they have no *true wisdom* in them. In those very *fords* and apparent *shallows* of this river of God where the *lamb* may wade, the *elephant* may swim. Everything in the Scripture is so plain that the *lowliest believer* may understand all that belongs to his duty, or is necessary to his happiness. Yet nothing is so plain that the wisest of them all will have no reason to adore the depths and stores of divine wisdom in it. All apprehensions of the obscurity of the Scripture arise from one of these two causes:

(1.) That the minds of men are prepossessed with *opinions, dogmas, principles*, and practices in religion, received by tradition from their fathers; or they have vehement and corrupt inclinations to such ways, practices, and opinions, that suit their carnal reason and interest. It is no wonder if such persons conceive that the Scripture is *dark and obscure*. For they can neither find in it what they most desire, nor can they understand what is revealed in it, because it is opposite to their prejudices, affections, and interests. The design of the Scripture is to *destroy that frame of mind in them which they would have established*; no man is to look for *light* in the Scripture in order to countenance his own *darkness*.

(2.) It will appear *obscure* to all men who come to reading and studying it in the *mere strength of their own natural abilities*; and it may be on this account that some have considered St. Paul as *one of the obscurest writers they ever read*.

Thus, just as a book written in Greek or Hebrew must be obscure to those who have no skill in these languages, so the Scripture will be obscure to all who are unfurnished with those spiritual preparations which are required for the right understanding of it; for —

2. When we assert the *clearness and perspicuity* of the Scripture, it is supposed that, for understanding it, use is made of that *aid and assistance* of the Spirit of God which we are discussing. Without this, the *clearest revelations* of divine supernatural things will appear wrapped up in darkness and obscurity: not for lack of light *in them*, but for lack of light *in us*. Therefore, by asserting the necessity of supernatural illumination for the right understanding of divine revelation, we in no way impeach the *perspicuity* of the Scripture. All things in which our faith and obedience are concerned, are clearly declared in it. However, when all is done, "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, nor can he know them," 1Cor 2.14 until the eyes of his understanding are enlightened.

3. The Holy Spirit has so disposed the Scripture that, notwithstanding that *perspicuity* which is in the whole with respect to its proper end, in various parts or passages of it there are —

(1.) some things "hard to be understood;" 2Pet 3.16 and,

(2.) some things "hard to be uttered, or interpreted." Heb 5.11

The former are the things themselves, which are hard in their *own nature*; the latter are hard from the *manner* of their declaration.

(1.) In the Scripture there are things that are *deep, wonderful, mysterious*. In their own nature, they absolutely exceed the whole compass of our understanding or reason, as to a full and perfect comprehension of them. Nor should it to be strange to anyone that various *divine revelations* should be about things that are incomprehensible in their own nature; for as to us,

many earthly and natural things are incomprehensible, as David affirms concerning the forming of our natures in the womb, Psa 139.5-6, 14-16. And our Savior assures us that heavenly things are much more above our comprehension than earthly, Joh 3.12. These include things such as the *Trinity*, or the subsistence of one *single divine nature in three persons*; the *incarnation* of Christ, or the assumption of our human nature into personal union and subsistence with the Son of God; the *eternal decrees* of God, their nature, order, causes, and effects; the *resurrection* of the dead; the *manner* of the operations of the Holy Spirit in forming the new creature in us, and various others. Our rational faculties in their utmost improvement in this world, under the highest advantage they are capable of by spiritual light and grace, are still not able by all their searchings, to find out the Almighty to perfection in these things. [6]

And in all disputes about the light of glory — such as whether we will be able to behold the essence of God by it, or discern the depths of the mystery of the incarnation, and the like — men only "darken counsel by words without knowledge;" Job 38.2 they talk of what they neither do nor can understand. Yet the wisdom of the Holy Spirit has provided, in these two ways, that we will not suffer from our own weakness:

[1.] In that, whatever is necessary for us to believe concerning these things, it is *plainly and clearly revealed* in the Scripture and that revelation is declared in propositions and expressions that are obvious to our understandings. The one who thinks we can believe nothing as to its *truth* except what we can comprehend as to its *nature*, overthrows all faith, and reason also. Propositions may be clear to us in their sense, when their subject-matter is incomprehensible. For instance, consider the *incarnation of the Son of God*, and the *hypostatic union* of the divine and human natures

in this; it is a thing above our reason and comprehension. But it is plainly asserted and declared in the Scripture that "the Word, which was God, and was with God," was "made flesh;" Joh 1.1, 14 that "God was manifest in the flesh;" 1Tim 3.16 that "the Son of God was made of a woman, made under the law;" Gal 4.4 that "he took on him the seed of Abraham;" Heb 2.16 that "he came from the Jews according to the flesh," and "is over all, God blessed forever;" Rom 9.5 and that "God redeemed his church with his own blood."Rev 5.9 Thus this great matter is plainly and perspicuously declared and expressed to us, as it is proposed to be believed, and as it is the object of our faith. If anyone now says he *will not believe that this is the sense of these expressions*, which the words plainly and undeniably manifest it to be (and they are incapable of any other sense or construction), and this is because he cannot understand or comprehend the thing itself which it signifies — then plainly he is saying that he will believe nothing on the authority and veracity of God revealing it, but he will only believe what he can comprehend by his own reason; this is to overthrow all divine faith. The reason of our believing, if we believe at all, is God's *revelation of the truth*, and not our understanding of the nature of the things revealed. Our faith is resolved into this, when our reason does not reach the nature and existence of the things themselves. And it is the work of the Spirit to *bring into captivity* to the obedience of the faith, every thought that might arise from our ignorance, or from the impotency of our minds to comprehend the things that are to be believed.2Cor 10.4 And that new religion of *Socinianism*, which pretends to reduce everything to reason, is wholly built on the most irrational principle that ever befell the minds of men. It is this alone: "*What we cannot comprehend in divine and infinite things, as to their own nature, we are not to believe in their revelation*."

On this ground alone, men of that persuasion reject the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the resurrection of the dead, and like mysteries of faith. Whatever testimony the Scripture gives to them, they profess that they will not believe them because their reason cannot comprehend them — this is a wild and irrational principle which leads to atheism, seeing that the being of God itself is absolutely incomprehensible.

[2.] That degree of knowledge which we can attain in and about these things is *in every way sufficient with respect to the end of the revelation itself*. If they were so proposed to us that, if we could not fully comprehend them, we would have no benefit or advantage by them, then the revelation itself would be lost, and the end of God would be frustrated in this. But it could not suit divine wisdom and goodness, to make such propositions to us. For this defect does not arise from any blamable *depravation of our nature as* corrupted, but from the very *essence and being* of that nature as created — for being finite and limited, it cannot perfectly comprehend infinite things. But whatever believers are able to attain, in that variety of the degrees of knowledge which in their several circumstances they attain, it is *sufficient* to the end to which it is designed. That is, it is sufficient to ingenerate, cherish, increase, and preserve faith, and love, and reverence, with holy obedience in them, in such a way and manner that it will assuredly bring them to the end of all supernatural revelation in the *enjoyment* of God.

(2.) There are some things in the Scripture that are "hard to be interpreted;" not from the *nature* of the things revealed, but from the *manner* of their revelation. Such are many *allegories, parables, mystical stories, allusions, unfulfilled prophecies* and *predictions, references* to the then *present customs, persons*, and *places, computation of times,*

genealogies, the *meaning of some single words that are seldom or only once used* in the Scripture, or the *names of various birds* and *beasts* that are unknown to us. The difficulty such things have, is from the *manner* of their declaration. It is hard to find out — and in some instances it may be impossible to find out with any determinate certainty — the proper, genuine sense of them in the places where they occur. But in this also, we have *relief* provided in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, in giving the whole Scripture for our instruction, against any *disadvantage* to our faith or obedience; for —

[1.] Whatever is *so delivered* in any place, if it is important for us to know and believe, as to the ends of divine revelation, it is *unveiled* and plainly declared in some other place or places. Thus we may say of it, as the disciples said to our Savior, "Lo, now he speaks plainly, and not in parables." Joh 16.29

There can be no instance given of any obscure place or passage in the Scripture, concerning which a man may rationally suppose or conjecture that there is any *doctrinal truth* requiring our obedience contained in it, which is not explained elsewhere. And there may be several reasons why the Holy Spirit chose to express his mind at any time in ways that had so much *obscurity* attending them:

1*st*. As for *types, allegories, mystical stories*, and *obscure predictions*, he made use of them under the Old Testament on purpose, to draw a *veil* over the things signified in them, or the truths taught by them. For the church was not yet to be acquainted with the clear knowledge of the things concerning Jesus Christ and his mediation. They did not have a *perfect image* of the things themselves, but only an *obscure shadow* or representation of the good things to come, Heb 10.1. To have *a full and clear revelation* of all divine truths given to them, would have cast into

disorder the whole design of God for the various states of the church, and the accomplishment of the great work of his grace and love. It was not hard, then, for the church to be taught of old in *types and allegories*. But it was much grace and mercy that through these, the light of the *Sun of Righteousness* so far beamed on them, that it enabled them comfortably to wait "until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," Song 4.6. The fullness and glory of the revelation of *grace and truth* was reserved for Jesus Christ. God did *them* no wrong, but reserved "better things for *us*," Heb 11.40.

2*dly*. Whatever seems yet to be continued under any obscurity of revelation, is so continued for the *exercise of our faith, diligence, humility, and dependence on God*, in our inquiries into them. And suppose we do not always attain precisely the proper and particular intent of the Holy Spirit in them — as we can never search out his mind to perfection —there are still so many and great advantages to be obtained by the due exercise of those graces in the study of the word, that we cannot be *losers* by any difficulties we can meet with. The rule in this case is that we *affix no sense to any obscure or difficult passage of Scripture, than what is materially true and consonant with other express and plain testimonies*. For men to raise peculiar senses from such places, that are not confirmed elsewhere, is a dangerous curiosity.

3*dly*. As to various *prophecies of future revolutions in the church and the world*, like those in the Revelation, there was an indispensable necessity to give them in the obscure *allegorical expressions* and *representations in which* we find them. For I could easily manifest that, as the clear and determinate declaration of *future events* in plain *historical expressions* is contrary to the nature of *prophecy*, so in this case it would have been a

means of bringing confusion on the works of God in the world, and of turning all men out of the way of their obedience.

Their present revelation is sufficient to guide the faith and regulate the obedience of the church, so far as they are concerned in them.

4*thly*. Some things are disposed in the Scripture on purpose, so that *evil, perverse, and proud men* may *stumble and fall at them*, or be further hardened in their unbelief and obstinacy. So our Lord Jesus Christ affirms that he spoke to the *stubborn Jews in parables that they might not understand*.[Mat 13.13] And because "*there* must be *heresies*, so that those who are approved may be recognized," 1Cor 11.19; and some are "of old ordained to this condemnation," Jude 4; some things are so declared, that proud, perverse, and wrangling spirits may take occasion from them to "wrest them to their own destruction." [2Pet 3.16] The truths of Christ, as well as his person, are appointed to be a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offense," [1Pet 2.8] indeed, "a gin and a snare" to many.[Isa 8.14] But humble, teachable believers are not concerned with this.[Mat 13.11]

[2.] The Holy Spirit has given us relief in this matter, by supplying us with a *rule of the interpretation of Scripture which, while we sincerely attend to it, we are in no danger of sinfully corrupting the word of God*, even if we do not arrive at its proper meaning in every particular place. And this rule is the *analogy* or "proportion of faith." [7] "Let him that prophesies," says the apostle — that is, who expounds the Scripture in the church — "do it according to the proportion of faith," Rom 12.6. And this *analogy* or "proportion of faith" is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole Scripture as the rule of our faith and obedience. When men engage their inquiries into the parts of the Scripture that are *mystical, allegorical*, or *prophetic*, aiming to find out, maybe, things that are new and curious —

without a constant regard for this *analogy of faith* — it is no wonder if they wander out of the way, and err concerning the truth, as many have done on that occasion. And I cannot help but declare my detestation of those bold and curious conjectures in which many have indulged themselves on obscure passages in the Scripture, without any regard for the *rule of prophecy*. But now, suppose a man brings no preconceived sense or opinion of his own to such places, seeking countenance for it from others (which is the bane of all interpretation of the Scripture).

Suppose he comes in some measure prepared with the spiritual qualifications mentioned before. And in all his inquiries he has a constant due regard for the *analogy of faith*, so as not to allow any sense which interferes with what is plainly declared elsewhere. Such a person will not miss the mind of the Holy Spirit; or if he does, he will assuredly be preserved from any hurtful danger in his mistakes. For there is that mutual relation, one to another, yes, that mutual in-being of all divine truths, in their proposal and revelation in the Scripture, that every one of them, in a way, is in every place — if not *properly* and *particularly*, yet by *consequence and coherence*. Therefore, although a man misses the *first proper sense* of any obscure place of Scripture, which we ought to aim at with all our diligence, so long as he receives only what contains a truth that is agreeable to what is revealed in other places, the error of his mind does not endanger his own faith or obedience, nor those of any others.

[3.] For those things which are particularly difficult, such as *genealogies, chronological computations* of time, and the like, which are incidental to the design of the Scripture, those who are able so to do may exercise themselves in this, for their own edification or that of others. But the consideration of them in particular, may be safely omitted by all others.

And these are the heads of the *work of the Holy Spirit* on our *minds* and on the *Scriptures*, considered distinctly and apart, with reference to the right understanding of the *mind of God in them*. By the former sort, *our minds* are prepared to understand the Scripture. And by the latter, *Scripture* is prepared and suited to our understandings. There remains the consideration of what He does, or what help He affords us, in the *actual application of our minds to the understanding and interpretation of the word*. And this respects the means which we are to make use of to that end and purpose. These also will be briefly declared.

1. The second part is on .
2. **Eph 4:11** And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, etc. **2Tim 3:14** But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, [15] and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
3. **1Cor 3:7** So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. **2Cor 4:7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.
4. **Eph 4:8** Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." … [11] And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;
5. **2Cor 5:18** Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, [19] that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

[20] Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

6. Job 11:7.

7. There seems a general agreement among modern critics that this expression of the apostle is not susceptible of the meaning which is here attached to it. It does not refer to any rule according to which we are to try a doctrine by its harmony with the system of divine truth as a whole (although the rule itself is sound and valuable); but the passage simply means that a man is to preach or prophesy "according to the measure of *his* faith," — the μέπρον πίστεως of which the apostle had been speaking in verse 3. — Ed.

Chapter VII. The right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture

Means to be used for the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture — Those which are prescribed in a way of duty.

The means to be used for the right understanding and interpretation of the Scripture, are of two sorts:

I. That sort which is general and absolutely necessary.

II. Those which consist in the due improvement of this understanding.

I. The first is *diligent reading of the Scripture, with a sedate, rational consideration of what we read*. Nothing is more frequently commended to us. Not to emphasize particular testimonies, but the whole 119th Psalm is spent in the declaration of this duty, and the benefits which are attained by it. In this consists the first natural exercise of our minds in order to understand it. So the eunuch read and pondered the prophecy of Isaiah, though by himself he could not attain the understanding of what he read, Acts 8.30-31. Either reading, or its equivalent, is that by which we apply our minds to know what is contained in the Scriptures; and without which, this is impossible. It is that which all other means are designed to render

useful. Now, by *reading* I mean that which is *sober, sedate, and considerative* with respect to the end aimed at; *reading* attended with a due consideration of the things *read*, inquiry into them, meditation on them, with a regard to the design and scope of the passage, with all other advantages for the due investigation of the truth. [1]

Frequent reading of the word more generally and cursorily is of great use and advantage — which all Christians ought to be trained to do from their youth, 2Tim 3.15, and which all closets and families [2] should be acquainted with, Deu 6.6-9. [3] I will therefore name some particular benefits which may be received by it:

1. By this the minds of men are brought into a *general acquaintance* with the nature and design of the *book of God*, which some, to their present shame and future ruin, are prodigiously ignorant of.

2. Those who are exercised in this, have come to know *distinctly* what things are addressed in the *particular books* and passages of it; while others who live in a neglect *of this duty scarcely* know which books are *historical*, which *prophetic*, or which *doctrinal*, in the whole Bible.

3. By this they exercise themselves to *thoughts of heavenly things* and a holy converse with God, if they bring along with them, as they should, hearts that are *humble* and sensible of his authority in the word.

4. Their minds are intangibly furnished with *due conceptions about God and spiritual things, about themselves and their conditions*; and their memories are furnished with expressions that are proper and fit to be used in prayer or otherwise.

5. God often takes occasion in this to *influence their souls* with the efficacy of divine truth in particular, in the way of *exhortation, reproof,*

instruction, or *consolation*; which all who attend diligently to this duty have experienced.

6. By "reason of habit," they come to have "their senses exercised to discern good and evil;" Heb 5.14 so that if any noxious or corrupt sense of any passage of Scripture is suggested to them, they have other passages ready with which to oppose it, and from which they are instructed in the truth.

And there are many other advantages which men may reap from the *constant reading* of the Scripture. I therefore consider this a *general means* of coming to the knowledge of the mind of God in this. But this is not what I especially intend at present. Therefore —

By this sort of *reading* of the Scripture, I mean *studying* it, in the use of means, to come to a due understanding of it in particular places. For what we now inquire about is the means of the *solemn interpretation* of the Scripture. What is required for this, I say, is the general study of the whole, and the places to be interpreted in particular. It may seem altogether needless and impertinent to give this direction for understanding the mind of God in the Scripture — namely, that we should read and study it to that end — for who can imagine how it would be done otherwise? But I wish the practice of many, maybe most, did not render this direction necessary. For in their design to come to the knowledge of spiritual things, the direct immediate study of the Scripture is what they least of all apply themselves to. They will read and study other writings with diligence; but their reading of the Scripture is superficial for the most part. It is without that intension of mind and spirit, without the use and application of means, which are necessary for understanding it, as the event manifests. It is the immediate study of the Scripture that I intend. And I refer to this —

1. A due consideration of the *analogy of faith* is always to be retained (fn, p. 59);

2. A due examination of the *design and scope of the place*;

3. A diligent observation of *antecedents* and *consequents*; with all those general rules which are usually given as directions in the interpretation of the Scripture.

Therefore, in the diligent exercise of our minds and reasons, this is the first general outward means of knowing the mind of God in the Scripture, and the interpretation of it.

II. The means designed for the improvement of this, or our profitable use of it, are of three sorts:

1. *Spiritual*;

2. *Disciplinary* (chap.8);

3. *Ecclesiastical* (chap. 9).

Some instances on each head will further clarify what I intend.

1. The first thing required as a *spiritual means is prayer*. I intend *fervent and earnest prayer* for the assistance of the Spirit of God revealing the mind of God; as it is in the whole of Scripture, so it is in particular books and passages of it. I have proved before that this is both enjoined and commanded of us by the practice of the *prophets* and *apostles*.

And by the way, this also invincibly proves that the due investigation of the mind of God in the Scripture, is a work above the utmost improvement of natural reason, with all outward advantages whatever. For if we were sufficient of ourselves for this work, without immediate divine aid and assistance, then why do we pray for them? With this argument, the ancient church perpetually urged the *Pelagians* as to the necessity of saving grace. And it may justly be supposed that no man who professes himself to be a

Christian, can be so forsaken of all sobriety as to once question whether this is the *duty of everyone* who has either desire or design to attain any real knowledge of the will of God in the Scripture. But the practical neglect of this duty is the true reason why so many who are skilful enough in the *disciplinary means of knowledge*, are yet strangers to the true knowledge of the mind of God. And this prayer is of two sorts:

(1.) That which respects the *teaching of the Spirit* in general, by which we labor in our prayers that *he would enlighten our minds and lead us into the knowledge of the truth*, according to the work described before. The *importance of this grace* for our faith and obedience, the *multiplied promises* of God concerning it, our needing it because of our natural weakness, ignorance, and darkness, should render it a principal part of our daily supplications. This is especially incumbent on those who are called in a special manner to "search the Scriptures" and to declare the mind of God in them to others. Great are the advantages which a conscientious discharge of this duty, with a due reverence of God, brings with it. Prejudices, preconceived opinions, engagements by secular advantages, false confidences, the authority of men, influences from parties and societies, will all be laid level before it — or at least they will be gradually exterminated from the minds of men by it. It has been proved before how much casting out all this "old leaven" tends to prepare the mind for divine revelations, and give it a due understanding of them. I no way doubt that the rise and continuance of all those *enormous errors* which so infest Christian religion, and which many seek so sedulously to confirm from the Scripture itself, are in great measure to be ascribed to corrupt affections, with the power of tradition and influences of secular advantages. These cannot firm their station in the minds of those who are constant and sincere suppliants at

the throne of grace, to be taught by God what is His mind and will in His word. For it includes a *prevailing resolution* to sincerely receive what we are so instructed in, whatever effects it may have on the inward or outward man. And this is the only way to preserve our souls under the influences of divine teachings and the irradiation of the Holy Spirit. Without this, we can neither learn nor know anything as we should.

I suppose, therefore, this may be fixed on as a common *principle of Christianity*: namely, that constant and fervent prayer for the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, is such an indispensable means for attaining the knowledge of the mind of God in the Scripture, that without it, all other means will not be available.

Nor do I believe that anyone who does and can thus pray as he should, in a conscientious study of the word, will ever be left to the *final prevalence* of any pernicious error, or the ignorance of any fundamental truth. None utterly miscarry in seeking after the mind of God except those who are perverted by their own corrupt minds. Whatever other appearance there is of sincerity and diligence in seeking after truth, if men miscarry in *this*, it is far safer to judge that they do so either through the neglect of this duty of prayer, or indulging some corruption of their hearts and minds, than to judge that God fails to reveal himself to those who diligently seek him. There are unfailing grounds of this assurance; for —

[1.] Faith exercised in this duty will work out all that "filthiness and overflow of wickedness" which would hinder us from receiving "with meekness the ingrafted word," so that it will "save our souls." Jas 1.21

[2.] It will work in the mind those gracious qualifications of *humility and meekness*, to which the teachings of God are promised in a special manner, as we have shown. And,

[3.] Our Savior has assured us that his heavenly Father will "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him," Luk 11.13. Nor is any supplication for the Holy Spirit more acceptable to God than that which designs the knowledge of his mind and will, so that we may do them.

[4.] All those *graces* which render the mind *teachable and fit for receiving heavenly truths* are kept up to a due exercise in this. If we do not deceive *ourselves* in these things, we cannot be deceived. For in the discharge of this duty, those things are learned in their *power*, of which we have only the *notion* in other means of instruction. Hereby, whatever we learn is so fixed in our minds, possesses them with such power, transforming them into its likeness, that they are prepared for the communication of further light, and increases in the degrees of knowledge.

Nor can it be granted, on the other hand, that any sacred truth is learned in a *due manner* (whatever diligence is used in its acquisition), or that we can know the mind of God in the Scripture in anything as we should, when the management of all other means which we make use of to that end, is not committed unto the hand of this duty. The apostle earnestly desires that those to whom he wrote, and whom he instructed in the mysteries of the gospel, might have a due spiritual understanding of the mind of God as revealed and taught in those mysteries. And so he prays with all fervency of mind, that they might have a communication of "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" from above, to enable them to this end, Eph 1.16-19, 3.15-19; [4] for without this, he knew it could not be attained.

What he did for *them*, we are obliged to do for *ourselves*. And where this is neglected, there is no ground to expect that anyone would ever learn the saving knowledge of the mind of God in a due manner — especially

considering that the *supplies of the Spirit* for this purpose are confined to those who *ask* him. I will therefore fix this assertion as a sacred truth:

Whoever, in the diligent and immediate study of the Scripture to know the mind of God in this so as to do it, abides in fervent supplications in and by Jesus Christ, for supplies of the Spirit of grace to lead him into all truth; to reveal and make known to him the truth as it is in Jesus; to give him an understanding of the Scriptures and the will of God in this; that he will be preserved from pernicious errors, and attain that degree of knowledge which will be sufficient for the guidance and preservation of the life of God in the whole of his faith and obedience.

There is more security of truth in this, than in men's giving themselves up to any other conduct in this world whatsoever. The goodness of God, his faithfulness in being the "rewarder of those who diligently seek him," the command of this duty to this end, the promises annexed to it, with the whole nature of religion, give us the highest security in this. And although these *duties* cannot help but be accompanied with a conscientious care and fear of errors and mistakes, the *persons* who are found in them, have no ground for troublesome thoughts or fearful suspicions that they will be deceived, or fail in the end they aim at.

(2.) Prayer respects *particular occasions*, or special passages of Scripture, whose exposition or interpretation we inquire after. This is the great duty of *a faithful interpreter*: that he takes himself to prayer in, with, and after the use of all means. An experience of divine guidance and assistance in this, is invaluable to some, however despised by others. But would we think it strange for a Christian, when perhaps after the use of all other means, he finds himself at a loss about the true meaning and intention of the Holy Spirit in any place or text of Scripture, to take himself to God by *prayer*, in

a more than ordinary manner, so that God by His Spirit would enlighten, guide, teach, and so reveal the truth to him? Or would we think it strange that God hears such prayers, and instructs such persons in the secrets of his covenant? God forbid that there should be such *atheistic* thoughts in the minds of any who would be esteemed Christians! Indeed, I must say that for a man to undertake the interpretation of any part or portion of Scripture in a solemn manner, without *invocation of God in order to* be taught and instructed by his Spirit, is a high provocation of God. Nor will I expect the discovery of truth from anyone who so proudly and ignorantly engages in a work so much above his ability to manage.

I say this about solemn and stated interpretations; for otherwise a "scribe ready furnished for the kingdom of God" Mat 13.52 may (as he has occasion) from the spiritual light and understanding with which he is endowed, and the stores he has already received, declare the mind of God for the edification of others. But this is the first means to render our *studying of the Scripture* useful and effectual to the end aimed at.

This, as said, is the *sheet-anchor* of a faithful expositor of the Scripture, which he turns to in all difficulties. Nor without it can he be led into a comfortable satisfaction that he has attained the mind of the Holy Ghost in any divine revelation. When all other helps fail, as he will find them doing in most places, and if he is really intent on the disquisition [5] of truth, this will yield him his best relief. And so long as this is attended to, we need not fear further useful interpretations of the Scripture, or the several parts of it, than have yet been attained by the endeavors of others. For the stores of truth laid up in it are inexhaustible; and hereby they will be opened to those who inquire into them with humility and diligence. The labors of those who have gone before us are of excellent use in it; but they are still very far from

having discovered the *depths* of this vein of wisdom. Nor will the best of our endeavors prescribe limits and bounds to those who come after us. And the reason why *most expositors* go in the same track one after another, seldom passing beyond the beaten path of former endeavors (unless it is in some excursions of curiosity), is the lack of surrendering themselves to the conduct of the Holy Spirit in the diligent performance of this duty.

2. *Readiness to receive impressions from divine truths as revealed to us*, conforming our minds and hearts to the doctrine made known, is another means to the same end. This is the first end of all divine revelations, of all heavenly truths: namely, to produce the image and likeness of themselves in the minds of men, Rom 6.17; 2Cor 3.18. [6] And we miss our aim if this is not the first thing we intend in the study of the Scripture. It is not to learn *the form of the doctrine of godliness*, but to get the *power* of it implanted in our souls. And this is an eminent means of our making progress in the knowledge of the truth. To seek after mere *notions of truth*, without an endeavor to *experience its power* in our hearts, is not the way to increase our understanding in spiritual things. Only the one who sincerely surrenders his mind, conscience, and affections to the power and rule of what is revealed to him, is in a posture to learn from God.

Men may also have other ends in their study of the Scripture, such as the profit and edification of others. *But if conforming their own souls to the power of the word* is not fixed in the first place in their minds, they do not *strive lawfully nor will they be crowned*. If at any time when we study the word, we do not have this design expressly in our minds, and if upon the discovery of any truth we do not endeavor to have its likeness in our own hearts, we lose our principal advantage by it.

3. *Practical obedience in the course of our walking before God* is another means to the same end. The gospel is the "truth which is according to godliness," Tit 1.1. It will not long abide with any who do not follow after godliness according to its guidance and direction. Hence we see so many lose that very understanding which they had of its doctrines, once they begin to give themselves up to ungodly lives. The true notion of *holy, evangelical truths* will not *live*, or at least not *flourish*, where they are divided from a holy way of life. Just as we learn all *in order to* practice it, so we learn much by practice. There is no *practical science* which we can make any great improvement in, without an assiduous practice of its *theorems*. Much less is *wisdom* to be increased, or the understanding of the mysteries of Scripture, unless a man is *practically* conversant about the things which it directs him to.

Hereby alone can we come to the *assurance* that what we know and learn is indeed the truth. So our Savior tells us that "if any man does the will of God, he will know of the doctrine whether it is of God," Joh 7.17. While men learn the truth only in the notion of it, whatever conviction may accompany it of its being true, they will never attain *stability* in their minds concerning it, nor come to the *full assurance of understanding*, unless they continually exemplify it in their own obedience, doing the will of God. This is what will give them a satisfactory persuasion of it. And hereby they will be led continually into further degrees of knowledge. For the mind of man is capable of receiving *continual supplies* in the increase of light and knowledge while it is in this world, if they are improved to their proper end in obedience to God. But without this the mind will be quickly stuffed with notions, so that no streams can descend into it from the fountain of truth.

4. *A constant design for growth and progress in knowledge, out of love for the truth and experience of its excellence*, is useful (indeed, needful) for the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scriptures. Some are quickly apt to think that they know *enough*, as much as is needful for them. Some think that they know *all* that is to be known; or that they have a sufficient comprehension of all the counsels of God as revealed in the Scripture, or (as they judge) of the whole *body of divinity*, in all its parts, which they may have disposed into an exact method, with great accuracy and skill. I will expect no great or useful discoveries of the mind of God from such persons.

Quite another frame of heart and spirit is required in those who design to be instructed in the mind of God, or to learn it in the study of the Scripture. Such persons look at it as a treasury of divine truths, absolutely unfathomable by any created understanding. The truths which they receive from there, and comprehend according to their measure, they judge *amiable, excellent, and desirable* above all earthly things. For they find the fruit, benefit, and advantage of these truths, in strengthening the life of God in them, conforming their souls to him, and the communicating of his light, love, grace, and power to them.

This makes them continually press on with purpose of heart, in the use of all means to increase in this wisdom — to grow in the knowledge of God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They are continually pressing on to that measure of perfection which is attainable in this life. And every new beam of truth by which their minds are enlightened, guides them into fresh discoveries of it. This frame of mind is under a promise of divine teaching: Hos 6.3, "Then we will know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Pro 2.3-5, "If you cry for knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as for silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you

shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." When men live in a holy admiration of and contentment in God, *as* the God of truth, *as* the first infinite essential Truth, in whose enjoyment alone there is fullness of all satisfactory light and knowledge; when they adore the fullness of those revelations of himself which, with infinite wisdom, he has treasured up in the Scriptures; when they find by experience, an excellence, power, and efficacy in what they have attained; when, out of a deep sense of the smallness of their measures — of the meanness of their attainments, and how little a portion it is that they know of God — they live in a constant design to abide with faith and patience in continual study of the word, and inquiries into the mind of God in it; — *then they are in the way of being taught by him*, and learning his mind to all the proper ends of its revelation.

5. There are various *ordinances of spiritual worship* which God has ordained as a means of our illumination, a religious attendance which is required of those who intend to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2Pet 3.18

This is the first head, of means for the due improvement of our endeavors in reading and studying the Scriptures, so that we may thereby come to a right understanding of the mind of God in them, and be able to interpret them for the use and benefit of others.

What the work of the *Holy Spirit* is in this, what the aid and assistance is which he contributes to this, is so manifest from what we have discussed, especially concerning his operations in us as a Spirit of grace and supplication (not yet made public), [7] that it must not be insisted on here.

It may be that these means will be despised by some. And proposing them for this end may be looked at as weak and ridiculous, if not extremely *fanciful*. For it is supposed that these things are pressed to no other end than

to decry *learning, study*, and the use of reason in the interpretation of the Scriptures, which would quickly reduce all religion into *enthusiasm*. Whether there is anything of truth in this suggestion will be immediately revealed. Nor have those by whom these things are pressed, the least reason to decline the use of *learning*, or any rational means in their proper place, as though they were conscious of a deficiency in them with respect to those by whom they are so highly, and indeed for the most part *vainly*, pretended to.

But in the matter in hand, we must deal with some confidence. Those by whom these things are *decried*, by whom they are *denied* to be necessary means for the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scriptures, plainly renounce the chief principles of Christian religion. The Scripture has many things *in common* with other writings in which *secular arts and sciences* are declared. But to suppose that we may attain the sense and mind of God in them by the mere use of those same *ways and means* which we apply in the investigation of truths of other natures, is to exclude all consideration of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and of the end of the Scriptures themselves — of the nature and use of the things delivered in them. And consequently, it is to overthrow all religion. See Pro 28.5. [8]

This first sort of *means* which we have insisted on up to here, are *duties* in themselves, as well as *means* to further ends. And *all duties* under the gospel are the ways and means in which, and by which, the graces of God are exercised. For just as no *grace* can be exerted or exercised except by way of duty, so no duty is *evangelical* or accepted with God without special grace being exercised in it. Just as the word is the rule by which they are guided, directed, and measured, so the *acting of grace in them* is what quickens them. Without this, the best duties are but dead works. *Materially* they are duties, but *formally* they are sins.

Therefore, in their performance as gospel duties, and as they are accepted with God, there is a special aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit. And on that account, there is special aid and assistance in the *interpretation* of the Scriptures. For if we cannot make right use of the *means* of interpreting the Scripture without his assistance, we cannot *interpret* the Scripture without it. The truth is, those who either say that these duties are not necessarily required for those who would "search the Scriptures," and find out the mind of God for their own edification, or to expound those oracles of God to others, or say that they may be performed in a manner acceptable to God and usefully to this end, without the special assistance of the Holy Spirit, *impiously* evert,[9] as much as it lies in them, the whole doctrine of the gospel and its grace.

What might be insisted on next, is the consideration of the *special rules* which have been, or may yet be, given for the right interpretation of the Scriptures. Such are those which concern *the style* of the Scripture, its special *phraseology*, the *tropes* and *figures* it makes use of, the *way* of its arguing; the *times* and seasons in which it was written, or the several parts of it; the *occasions* under the guidance of the Spirit of God given to this; the *design* and scope of *particular writers*, with what is particular to them in their manner of writing; the *comparison of several places* as to their difference in things and expressions; the reconciliation of seeming contradictions, with other things of a like nature. But most of these may be reduced to what has been said before about the *disposal and perspicuity* of the Scripture, and they have already been handled by many others at large. Therefore I will not insist on them here, but will speak only to the general means that are to be applied to the same end.

1. Other advantages: dictionary, concordance, atlas, Bible dictionary, Bible handbook, etc. – WHG

2. That is, simply reading the Bible should be part of both private and family devotions.

3. **Deu 6:6** "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. [7] "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up, etc.

4. **Eph 1:16** I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, [18] the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, [19] and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power; **Eph 3:15** from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, [16] that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, [17] that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height-- [19] to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

5. *Disquisition*: an elaborate analytical or explanatory essay or discussion.

6. **Rom 6:17** But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. **2Cor 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
7. The treatise to which Dr. Owen alludes was subsequently published, and appears in this volume of his works, . — Ed.
8. **Pro 28:5** Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the LORD understand all.
9. *Evert*: Turn inside out.

Chapter VIII. Disciplinarian means for the interpretation of the Scripture

The second sort of means for the interpretation of the Scripture, which are disciplinarian.

The second sort of means I call *disciplinarian*, consisting in the due use and improvement of *common arts and sciences*, applied to and made use of in the study of the Scriptures. And these are things which have no *moral good* in themselves, but being indifferent in their own nature, their end, with the manner of their management for this, is the only measure and standard of their worth and value. Hence in applying them to the *interpretation of the Scripture*, they may be *used rightly* and in a due manner, and they may be *abused* to the great disadvantage of those who use them; and it has fallen out accordingly.

In the first way, [using them rightly], they receive a *blessing* from the Spirit of God, who alone prospers every good and honest endeavor in any kind; and in the latter way, they are efficacious to *seduce* men to trust in their own understandings, which in other things is foolish, and in these things is pernicious.

1. In the first place, [1] what I prefer of this sort is *knowledge of and skill in the languages in which the Scripture was originally written*. For their very words in this were particularly from the Holy Ghost, which makes them *words of truth*, and the Scripture itself to be a *right, or upright, or perfect writing*, Ecc 12.10. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were given to the church while it was entirely confined to one nation, Psa 147.19-20. [2] Thus they were all written in that language which was common among, and particular to, that nation. And this language, like the people itself, was called Hebrew, from Eber the son of Salah, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, their most eminent progenitor, Gen 10.21-24. For being the one original tongue of mankind, it remained in some part of his family, who probably did not join in the *great apostasy* of the world from God, nor was he concerned in their dispersion at the building of Babel, which ensued from that.Gen 11.9 The derivation of that name from another *origin* is a fruit of curiosity and vain conjecture, as I have demonstrated elsewhere.

In the process of time, that people was carried into *captivity* out of their own land, and forced to learn and use a language somewhat different from their own. It was not another language absolutely, yet it so far differed from it that those who knew and spoke the one, commonly could not understand the other, 2Kng 18.26. [3] This was "the language of the Chaldeans," Dan 1.4, which Daniel and others learned. But by the people's long continuance in that country, it became common to them all. After this, some parts of the books of the Scripture, such as Daniel and Ezra, were written in that language, as also *one* verse in the prophecy of Jeremiah, when they were ready to be carried there, in which he instructs the people how to reproach the idols of the nations in their own language. [4] The design of God was that His word should be always read and used in that language which was

commonly understood by those to whom he granted this privilege; nor could any of the ends of his wisdom and goodness in that merciful grant be otherwise attained.

The Scripture is the foundation-rule and guide of the whole church — the spiritual food and means of life for all its members. The prodigious conceit by the *church* (or those who pretend to be entrusted with its power and rights) of *keeping* it in a *language unknown* to the community of the people, [5] had not then befallen the minds of men. Nor does it have any countenance given to it by the authority of God, nor by the reason of mankind. Indeed, the advancement and defense of this imagination is one of those things which sets me at liberty from being influenced by the *authority* of any sort of men in matters of religion. For what will their confidence not undertake to vent, and their *sophistical* ability not give countenance to or wrangle about, which their interest requires and calls for at their hands, when they can openly plead and contend for the truth of such an absurd and irrational assertion? It is contrary to all that we know of God and his will, and to all that we understand of ourselves or our duty with respect to this.

When the New Testament was written, the church was to be diffused throughout the world among people of all tongues and languages under heaven. And yet there was a need for it to be written in *some one certain language*, in which the sacred truth of it might be safely laid up and deposited, as in original records. The Holy Ghost left it as "a good and sacred *depositum*" for the ministry of the church, to be kept inviolate. [6] And it was disposed into writing in *one certain language*; on which the preservation of it in purity was committed to the ministry of all ages — not absolutely, but under His care and inspection. From this one *language*, God had ordained that it should be derived, by the care of the ministry, into the

knowledge and use of all nations and people. And this was represented by the *miraculous gift of tongues* communicated by the Holy Ghost to the first-designed publishers of the gospel. In this case, it pleased the wisdom of the Holy Ghost to make use of the Greek language, in which he wrote the whole New Testament originally. The report that the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews were first written in Hebrew, is altogether groundless; and I have disproved it elsewhere.

Now, this language at that time, through all sorts of advantages, was diffused throughout the world, especially in those parts where God had designed to fix the first and principal station of the church. For the eastern parts of the world, this language was long before carried into them, and its use was imposed on them by Macedonian arms and laws, with the establishment of the Grecian empire for various ages among them. And some while before, in the western parts of the world, the same language was greatly inquired into and generally received, on account of the *wisdom* and *learning* which was treasured up in it, in the writings of poets, philosophers, and historians, which had newly received a particular advancement.

Two things fell out in the providence of God about that time, which greatly conduced to the furtherance of the gospel. The Jews were wholly possessed of whatever was *true* in religion, and which lay in direct subservience to the gospel itself. They gloried and boasted in this as a privilege which they enjoyed above all the world. The Grecians, on the other hand, were possessed of skill and wisdom in all arts and sciences, with the products of *philosophical inquiries*, and an elegance of speech in expressing the conceptions of their minds. And they gloried and boasted in this above all other people in the world. Now, the Romans dispossessed both these nations of their empire, sovereignty, and liberty at home, and

multitudes of them made it their business to disperse themselves in the world, and to seek, as it were, a new empire — the one for its religion, and the other for its language, arts, and sciences. The Roman writers in those days took notice of both sorts, along with their design, and greatly complained of it. These privileges being boasted of and rested in, proved equally prejudicial to both nations, as to the *reception of the gospel*. Our apostle disputes this at large in 1Corinthians chapters 1 and 2. But through the wisdom of God, disposing and ordering all things to his own glory, the design and actings of them both, became an effectual means to *facilitate* the propagation of the gospel. For the Jews having planted synagogues in most nations, and the principal cities in the Roman empire, they had leavened multitudes of people with some knowledge of the true God, which prepared the way for the gospel. They had also gathered *fixed assemblies*, which the preachers of the gospel constantly took advantage of to enter upon their work and begin the declaration of their message. The Grecians, on the other hand, had so universally diffused the knowledge of their language, that the use of that one tongue alone was sufficient to instruct all sorts of people throughout the world, in the knowledge of the truth. For the *gift of tongues* was only to be a "sign to unbelievers," 1Cor 14.22, and not a means of preaching the gospel constantly in a language which the speaker did not understand.

God therefore ordered that the books of the New Testament be written in this language, as the most common, diffusive, and generally understood in the world. From this, by translations and expositions, it was to be derived into other tongues and languages. For the design of God was still the same — that his word should be declared to the church in a language which it understood. Hence that peculiar distribution of the nations of the world into

Jews, Greeks, Barbarians, and Scythians, in Col 3.11, is not accommodated to the use of those terms in Grecian writers, to whom the Jews were no less barbarians than the Scythians themselves.

But as the Scriptures of the Old Testament were uniquely given to the Jews, so were those of the New Testament given to the Greeks — that is, those who made use of their language — from which it was deduced for all other nations, who were called Barbarians and Scythians.

It must be acknowledged that the Scripture, as written in these languages, is accompanied with many and great advantages:

(1.) In them peculiarly, it is "writing by divine inspiration," 2Tim 3.16; and it is the "book of the writing of the Lord," Isa 34.16; with a singular privilege above all translations. Hence the very words themselves, as used and placed in it, are *sacred, consecrated by God* for that holy use. Indeed, the *sacred sense* of the words and expressions is the *internal formal sacredness*, or that in which the holiness of the Scripture consists. But the *writing itself* in the original languages, in the words chosen and used by the Holy Ghost, is the *external formal sacredness* of the holy Scripture, and it is *materially sacred*.

It is the *sense* of the Scripture, therefore, which principally and for its own sake we inquire into; that divine sense which, as Justin Martyr says, is absolutely "above our natural reason, understanding, and comprehension." In the *words*, we are concerned with this sense because, by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, they are designed as the written signs of it.

(2.) Because the *words of the Scripture* are thus given immediately from God, every apex, tittle, or iota in the whole is considerable, as an effect of divine wisdom. And therefore it is filled with sacred truth, according to their place and measure. Hence they are all under the special care of God,

according to that promise of our Savior, Mat 5.18, "Truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will in no way pass from the law." I have proved elsewhere that our Savior means the *writing of the Scriptures* then in use in the church; and he assures the protection of God as to the least letter, vowel, or point of it. And in due time he will reprove the profane boldness of those who, without evidence or sufficient proof, without that respect and reverence which is due the interest, care, providence, and faithfulness of God in this matter, assert that *manifold changes* have been made in the original writings of the Scripture. [7]

But as I said, divine senses and singular mysteries may be couched in the use and disposal of a *letter*. God himself has manifested this in the change of the names of Abram and Sarai, and in various other instances, in which the addition or alteration of one letter carried along with it a mysterious meaning for the use of the church in all ages. In translations, nothing of that nature can be observed; and hence a due consideration of the very *accents* in the original of the Old Testament, as *distinctive* or *conjunctive*, is a singular advantage in the investigation of the sense of particular passages and sentences.

(3.) In the originals of the Scripture, there is a peculiar *emphasis* on words and expressions, and a special *energy* in them, to intimate and insinuate the sense of the Holy Ghost to the minds of men, which cannot be transmitted into other languages by translations, so as to obtain the same power and efficacy. Now, this is not absolutely from the nature of the *original languages* themselves, and especially not of the Greek, whose principal advantages and excellencies, in *copiousness* and *elegancy*, are little used in the New Testament. But it is from a secret impression of *divine wisdom and efficacy* accompanying the immediate delivery of the mind of God in them.

There is, therefore, no small advantage to be obtained from this in the interpretation of the Scripture. For when we have received an impression on our minds of the sense and intention of the Holy Ghost in any particular place, we will seek fit words to express it by, which the whole work of Scripture exposition consists in, so far as I have any acquaintance with it; [8] for when the mind is really affected with the discovery of truth itself, it will be guided and directed in the declaration of it to others.

(4.) The whole course of speech, especially in the New Testament, is accommodated to the nature, use, and propriety of that language, as expressed in other authors who wrote in it, and had a perfect understanding of it. Much is to be learned from them, therefore, of the proper use and sense of the words, phrases, and expressions in the New Testament.

No man can make a judgment about this in a due manner, except one *skilled* in that language, as used and delivered by them. Not that I think a *commentary* on the New Testament may be collected out of Eustathius, Hesychius, Phavorinus, Julius Pollux, and other glossaries, from whose *grammaticisms* and *vocabularies* some countenance themselves in having curious and bold conjectures; nor from similar expressions found in *classic* authors. I only say this: that it is of singular advantage, in the interpretation of the Scripture, that a man be well acquainted with the *original languages*, and be able to examine the use and meaning of words, phrases, and expressions as they are applied and declared in other authors. And even for understanding the Greek of the New Testament, it is necessary that a man have an acquaintance with the Hebrew of the Old. For even though I do not judge that there are a great number of *Hebraisms* in it — about which no small part of some men's *critical observations* consists in a supposed discovery of them — yet I readily grant that there is such a *cognation and*

alliance[9] in and between the senses of the one and the other, that a due comparison of their expressions mutually contributes light and perspicuity to them.

By these things, great advantage may be obtained for the right understanding of the sense of the Scripture, or of the mind of the Holy Ghost in this. For there is no other sense in it than what is contained in the words of which it *materially* consists; though really, that sense itself is such that our minds cannot receive it without the special divine assistance pleaded before. And in the interpretation of the mind of anyone, it is necessary that the *words* he speaks or writes are rightly understood. And we cannot do this immediately, unless we understand the *language in which* he speaks, and also the *idioms* of that language, with the common use and intent of its *phraseology* and expressions. If by this, we do not come to a perfect comprehension of the sense intended, because many other things are required for it, yet a hindrance is removed, without which we cannot comprehend it. Occasions of manifold mistakes are removed, and the cabinet is unlocked, as it were, in which the jewel of truth lies hidden, which may be found with a lawful and diligent search. Ignorance of these *original languages* has cast many expositors into great perplexities, mistakes, and errors, both of old and of late, especially among those who pertinaciously adhere to *one translation* (and that not being the best). This might be manifested by countless undeniable instances. Such is that gloss on Titus 3.10, "Hæreticum hominem de vita," which adds, as its exposition, "tolle." [10]

And those among ourselves who are less skilled in this knowledge are to be advised that they should be careful not to venture on any *singular exposition of the Scriptures*, or any *text* in them, on the credit of any one or

all translations they can make use of, seeing that persons of greater name and worth than to be mentioned to their disrepute, have miscarried on the same account. A reverential subjection of mind, and diligent attendance to the *analogy of faith, are* their best preservative in this matter. And I do not fear to add, that a *superficial knowledge in these tongues*, which many aim at, is of little use unless it is to make men *adventurous* in betraying their own ignorance. But because the sense and substance of the Scripture is contained entirely in every *good translation* (among which, that in use among ourselves is *excellent*, though capable of great improvements), men may, by the use of the means directed to before, and under the conduct of the teaching of the Spirit of God in them, usefully and rightly expound the Scripture in general for the edification of others. Many instances of this may be given among ancient and modern expositors.

This *skill and knowledge*, therefore, is of great use to those who are called to the interpretation of the Scripture. And the church of God has had no small advantage by the endeavors of men who are *learned* in this, who have exercised it in the exposition of the words and *phraseology* of the Scriptures, as compared with their use in other authors. Yet, as observed before, this skill and its exercise in the way mentioned, is no *duty* in itself; nor is it enjoined to anyone for its own sake. But it only has *goodness* in it with respect to a certain end. Therefore, it is *indifferent* in its own nature, and it is capable of *abuse* in its utmost improvement; and lately, such abuse has fallen out to a great extreme. For the study of the *ordinal languages*, [11] and the exercise of skill in them in the interpretation of the Scripture, has been of great reputation, and deservedly so. Hence multitudes of learned men have engaged themselves in that work and study. And the number of *annotations and comments* on the Scripture, consisting principally in

critical observations, as they are called, have greatly increased. Those who are utter strangers to these things may not admit that many of them are of singular use. But where this skill and faculty has not been accompanied with that humility, sobriety, reverence of the Author of the Scripture, and respect for the *analogy of faith* — which ought to bear sway in the minds of all men who undertake to expound the oracles of God — may be, and has been, greatly abused, to the hurt of its owners and the disadvantage of the church. For —

[1.] It has been turned by some into the fuel of pride, and a noisome elation of mind. Indeed, experience shows that this kind of knowledge, where it is supposed signal, [12] is the most apt of all others to puff up and swell the vain minds of men, unless alloyed with a singular modesty of nature, or the mind itself is sufficiently corrected and changed by grace.

Hence the expressions of pride and self-conceit which some have burst into, on an imagination of their skill and faculty in criticizing on the Scriptures, have been ridiculous and impious. The Holy Ghost usually does not teach such persons; nor should I expect to learn much from them relating to the truth as it is in Jesus. Yet the stones they dig may be used by a skilful builder.

[2.] In many, it has been accompanied with a noxious, *profane curiosity*. Every tittle and apex will give them occasion for *fruitless conjectures*, vain for the most part, as were those of the cabalistic Jews. And this penchant [13] has filled us with needless and *futile* observations; which, beyond an ostentation [14] of the learning of their authors (indeed, the ultimate end for which they are designed), are of no use or consideration. But this is not all: some men have been prompted by this to boldly venture to *corrupt the text* itself, or the plain sense of it. For what else is done when men, for an

ostentation of their skill, produce quotations out of *learned authors* to illustrate or expound the sayings in Scripture, in which there seems to be some similarity in words and sounds, when in fact their senses are adverse and contrary? Among a thousand instances which might be given to exemplify this folly and confidence, we need take one alone. Take this saying of Hezekiah, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good, for there will be peace and truth in my days," Isa 39.8. To explain or illustrate it, one critic compares that holy man's submission and satisfaction in the peace of the church and in truth, with the *blasphemous imprecation* [15] of an impious wretch who would bring confusion on the world once he had left it. And many of our *recent critics* are farced [16] with such notable sayings.

And the confidence of some has fallen into greater excesses, and swelled over these bounds also. To countenance their conjectures and self-pleasing imaginations, from which they expect no small reputation for skill and learning, they fall in upon *the text* itself. [17] Indeed, we have come into an age in which many seem to judge that they can neither sufficiently value themselves, nor obtain an estimation in the world, without some bold sallies [18] of *curiosity* or *novelty* into the vitals of religion. They reflect contempt and scorn on all who are other-minded, as persons who are incapable of comprehending their attainments. Hence, among ourselves we have scarcely anything left *unattacked* in the doctrine of the reformed churches and England, in former days.

Nor will he be esteemed by many as a man of talents, learning, or judgment, if he does not have some *new curious opinion* or *speculation*, differing from what has been commonly taught and received formerly — even though most of these "renowned" notions among us are but corrupt

emanations from *Socinianism* or *Arminianism* on the one hand, or *Popery* on the other.

But what we treat is men of another sort — in truth, of another manner of learning — than the present corrupters of the doctrines of the gospel (those who, so far as I can perceive, do not trouble themselves much about the Scripture one way or another). These men are those who, in the exercise of the skill and ability under consideration, fall upon the Scripture itself, to make way for the advancement of their own conjectures. Ten thousand of these are not of the least importance compared with the duty and necessity of preserving the sacred text inviolate, and the just and due persuasion that it has been so preserved. For, first, they command the *vowels and accents* of the Hebrew text out of their way, as nothing to be concerned with, when their use in any one page of Scripture is of *incomparably* more worth and use than they themselves are or ever will be in the church of God. And this is done on slight *conjectures*. If this does not suffice to make way for their designs, then *letters and words* must be corrected on an unprovable supposition that the *ordinal text has been changed or corrupted*. The boldness of some has grown so intolerable, that it is as likely a means for the introduction and promotion of *atheism*, as any engine the devil has set to work in these days, where he is so openly engaged in that design.

There are also various other ways by which this great help to the understanding and interpretation of the Scripture may be and has been abused; those mentioned may suffice as instances confirming our observations. Therefore, just as *substantial* knowledge and skill in the *originals* is useful, and indeed necessary, for someone called to the exposition of the Scripture, so in the use and exercise of it, various things

ought to be well-considered by those who are furnished with them: such as —

1*st*. That the thing itself is not a grace, or any peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost, but a mere fruit of *diligence* upon a common furnishing with natural abilities. Nothing of this nature is to be rested on, or much trusted, in sacred things.

2*dly*. That the exercise *of this skill* in and about the Scripture is not in itself, as such, a special *or immediate duty*. If it were, there would be *special grace promised* to fill it up and quicken it; for all *gospel duties* are animated by grace in their due performance — that is, those who perform them have special assistance in doing so. But it is reduced to the general head of *duty* with respect to the end aimed at. Therefore,

3*dly*. The *blessing of God* on our endeavors, succeeding and prospering them, as in other natural and civil occasions of life, is all we expect in this from the Holy Spirit. And,

4*thly*. Various other things are required of us, if we hope for this blessing on just ground. It may be that some ignorant persons are so foolish as to imagine that if they could understand the *original languages*, they must of necessity understand the *sense* of the Scripture. And there is nothing more frequent than for some, who either truly or falsely pretend to have a skill in them, to bear themselves high against those who perhaps are really more acquainted with the mind of the Holy Ghost in the word than they themselves are — as though *all things were plain and obvious only to them*, and others know nothing, unless it is *by them* or those like them.

But this is only one means of many that are useful for this purpose. And it is such that, if it is alone, it is of little or no use at all. What must make this or any other means of the same nature effectual, is fervent prayer, humility,

lowliness of mind, godly fear and reverence of the word, and subjection of the conscience to the authority of every tittle of it, a constant attendance to the *analogy of faith*, with due dependence on the Spirit of God for supplies of light and grace.

2. I also reckon an acquaintance with the *history and geography of the world* and with *chronology*, among *disciplinarian* aids in the interpretation of the Scripture. For just as time is divided into what is past and what is to come, so there are various things in the Scripture which, in all seasons, relate to this: for —

(1.) God has given us an account in this, of the course and order of all things from the foundation of the world. And he did this for various important reasons, as incident with the general end of the Scripture. For hereby he has secured the testimony that he has given to his being, power, and providence, by the *creation* and rule of all things. The evidences that are given to this are those which are principally attacked by atheists. And although they sufficiently manifest and evince their own testimony to the common reason of mankind, yet various things relating to them are so involved in darkness and inextricable circumstances that, if all their concerns had not been plainly declared in the Scripture, the wisest of men would have been at a great loss about them; and so were those who always wanted the light and advantage of this. But here, just as he has plainly declared the *original emanation* of all things from his eternal power, so he has testified to his constant rule over all in all times, places, ages, and seasons, by uncontrollable instances. In this he has treasured up all sorts of examples, with such impressions of his goodness, patience, power, wisdom, holiness, and righteousness upon them, that they proclaim his almighty and righteous government of the whole universe.

And on the whole, he has delivered to us such a *tract and series of the ages of the world* from its beginning, that *atheism has* no tolerable pretense from tradition, testimony, or the evidence of things themselves, to challenge it. Whatever is objected against the beginning of all things, and the course of their continuance in the world as delivered to us in the Scripture — and which is secured not only by the authority of divine revelation, but also by a universal evidence of all circumstances — is foolish and ridiculous. I speak of the account given in general, sufficient for its own ends, and not from any men's *deductions* and applications of it to minute portions of time, which it was probably not designed for. It is sufficient for its end that its account, in general, which confounds all *atheistic* presumptions, is not to be impeached. And although the authority of the Scripture is not to be pleaded immediately against *atheists*, yet the matter and reason of it is — which from its own evidence, renders all contrary pretensions contemptible.

(2.) God has hereby given an account of the *beginning, progress, trials, faith, obedience*, and whole proceedings of the church, in the pursuit of the first promise, to the actual exhibition of Jesus Christ in the flesh. All things tended toward this for four thousand years. It is a glorious prospect that we have in this, to see the call and foundation of *the church* in the first promise given to our common parents:

- what additions of light and knowledge he granted to it successively by new revelations and promises;
- how he gradually adorned it with gifts, privileges, and ordinances;
- what ways and means he used to preserve it in faith, purity, and obedience;
- how he chastened, tried, punished, and delivered it;

- how he dealt with the nations of the world with respect to it, raising them up for its affliction, and destroying them for their cruelty and oppression of it;
- what the ways of wicked and sinful men were among them or in it, and what the graces and fruits were of his saints;
- how by his power He retrieved it out of various calamities, and preserved it against all opposition until its appointed season;

— all of which, with innumerable other effects of divine wisdom and grace, are blessedly represented to us in it.

Now, besides that spiritual wisdom and insight into the great design of God in Christ, which is required for a right understanding in these things (as they were types of better things to come and examples of gospel mysteries), there is a skill and understanding in the records and monuments of time, the geographical respect of one nation to another, the periods and revolutions of seasons and ages, that are required to rightly apprehend them in their first literal instance and intention.

And besides what is thus historically related in the Scripture, there are also prophecies of things to come in the church and among the nations of the world, which are great evidences of its own divinity, and supporting arguments of our faith. But without some good apprehension of the *distinction of times, seasons, and places*, no man can rightly judge about their accomplishment.

Secondly, there are, in particular, prophecies in the Old Testament which reach to the times of the gospel, upon the truth of which the whole Scripture depends. Such are those concerning the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection and recovery of the Jews, the erection of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world, with the oppositions that would be made to it. And many are

added to these in the New Testament itself, such as Mat 24-25, 2Thes 2.1-12, 1Tim 4.1-3, 2Tim 3.1-5, 4.3-4; but especially in the book of the Revelation, in which the state of the church and of the world is foretold up to the consummation of all things. How can any man arrive at a tolerable acquaintance with the *accomplishment of these prophecies* as to what has already past, or have a distinct and grounded expectation of the fulfilling of what remains foretold, without a look into the state of things in the world, the revolutions of times past, with what fell out in them? These are the things spoken of. Those who address them without it, only feign chimeras [19] to themselves, as men in the dark are apt to do; or they corrupt the word of God by turning it into senseless and excessive allegories. And on the other side, those who wholly neglect these things, despise the wisdom and care of God towards the church, and disregard a blessed means of our faith and consolation.

I acknowledge that some things of this nature, especially those which relate to *chronological computations*, are attended with great and apparently inextricable difficulties. But the skill and knowledge mentioned will guide humble and modest inquirers into so sufficient a satisfaction in general, as to all things which are really useful, that they will have no temptation to question the verity of what in particular they cannot solve. When we are guided and infallibly satisfied in a thousand things which we know are not otherwise, it is an *intolerable pride and folly* to question the authority of the whole because we cannot comprehend one or two particulars — which perhaps were never intended to be reduced to our measure. Besides, just as the investigation of these things is attended with difficulties, so ignorance or mistakes about them are of no great *disadvantage* while the minds of men are free from stubbornness and a spirit of contention. For they have very

little influence on our faith and obedience if we do not call into question what is revealed. It is probable that the Scripture never intended to give us such *minute chronological determinations* as some would deduce their computations to; and that is because it is not necessary.

Hence we see that some who have labored in this in *prodigious industry* and learning, although they have made some useful discoveries, they have never been able to give such evidence of their computations, that others would acquiesce in them. Rather, by all their endeavors they have administered occasions for *new strife* and contention about things that, it may be, are of no great importance to be known or determined. And in general, men have run into two extremes in these things. For some pretend to frame an *exact computation* and *consent of times* from the Scripture alone, without any regard for the records, monuments, histories, and signatures of times in the world. Wherever these appear in opposition or contradiction to the *chain* and *links* of time which they have framed for themselves (as they suppose from the Scripture), they reject them as matters of no consideration. It would be good if they could do this to satisfaction. But they have evidently failed in this — as for instance, in the computation of *Daniel's weeks*, in which they will allow but four hundred and ninety years from the *first of Cyrus to the death of our Savior*, contrary to the common consent of mankind about things that happened, and their continuance between those seasons, taking up five hundred and sixty-two years — this is manifest to all. The Scripture, indeed, is to be the only *sacred standard* and measure of things, in its proper sense and understanding. Nor is anything to be esteemed which rises up in contradiction to this. But just as due consideration of *foreign testimonies* and monuments often gives great light to what is more generally or

obscurely expressed in the Scripture, so where the Scripture in these things may be interpreted in fair compliance with *uncontrolled foreign testimonies* — with those allowances which it declares everywhere are admissible — that interpretation is to be embraced. The question is not, therefore, whether we will regulate the computation of times by the Scripture, or by the histories and marks of time in the world. The question is whether, when the sense of the Scripture is *obscure* in those things, and its determination is only general, so as to be equally capable of various senses, all other things being equal, is that not to be preferred which agrees with the *undoubted monuments* of times in the nations of the world? For instance, the angel Gabriel informs Daniel that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the prince and his cutting off, should *be seventy weeks* (to speak only of the whole number in general) — that is, *four hundred and ninety years*. Now, there were various commandments given or decrees made by the kings of Persia, who are intended for this purpose. Of these, two were the most famous: the one granted by Cyrus in the *first year of his empire*, Ezr 1.1-4; and the other by Artaxerxes in the *seventh year of his reign*, Ezr 7.11-26.

Between the first of these and the death of Christ, there must be allowed five hundred and sixty-two years, unless you would offer violence to all monuments, records, and circumstances of times in the world. It is therefore safer to interpret the general words of the angel, as referring to the *latter decree* or commandment, whose circumstances also make it more probable that it was intended, in which the space of time mentioned falls in exactly with other approved *histories* and records. Nor would I disallow another computation which, contending that the first decree of Cyrus is the beginning of the time mentioned, and allowing the whole space from there

to be really five hundred and sixty-two years, affirms that the Scripture excludes the consideration of the years *supernumerary to* [20] the four hundred and ninety. This is because of the interruptions which, at several times, were put upon the people in accomplishing the things foretold for so many years. Some suppose these are signified by the distribution of the whole number of *seventy weeks* into *seven, sixty-two, and one*, each fraction of which has its proper work belonging to it — for this computation offers no *violence* either to sacred or unquestionable human authority.

But on the other extreme, there are some who, observing the difficulties in these accounts as expressed in the Scripture from the beginning, have framed another *series of things* for themselves, openly diverse from that exhibited. And they have raked together from other authors some things giving countenance to their conjectures. Thus they profanely make bold to assault the *original text*, accusing it of *imperfection* or *corruption*, which they will rectify by their *fine inventions*, and by the aid of a *translation* known to be mistaken in a *thousand places*, and in some, justly suspected of wilful corruption. But this presumptuous confidence is nothing but an emanation from that *flood of atheism* which is assaulting the world in these declining ages.

3. The third aid or assistance of this kind, is a skill in the *ways and methods of reasoning*, which are supposed to be common to the Scriptures with other writings. And this, as it is an *art*, or an *artificial faculty* like those other means mentioned before, is capable either of a right improvement, or of being abused. *An ability to judge the sense of propositions*, how one thing depends on another, how it is deduced from it, follows from it, or is proved by it; what is the design of the one who writes or speaks in any discourse or reasoning; how it is proposed, confirmed, and illustrated — all

this is necessary for any rational consideration to be exercised about whatever is so proposed to us. And when the minds of men are confirmed in a good *habit of judgment, by the rules of the art of reasoning* about the ordinary ways and methods of it, it is of great advantage in the *investigation of the sense* of any writer, even of the Scripture itself.

And those ordinarily who would undertake the interpretation of any *series of Scripture* discourses without some ability in this science, will find themselves often *entangled* and at a loss, when by virtue of this science, they might be at liberty and free. Many of the *rules* which are commonly given about the interpretation of the Scripture — such as, the *scope* of the *author* in the place is to be duly considered, as are things that are *antecedent* and *consequent to* the place and to the words to be interpreted, and the like — are but directions for the due use of this *skill* or faculty.

But this also must be admitted to have its limitations; for whatever perfection there seems to be in our art of reasoning, it is subject to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture. His way of reasoning is always His own. Sometimes it is *sublime* and *heavenly*, so as not to be reduced to the common rules of our arts and sciences without a derogation from its *instructive, convictive*, and *persuasive* efficacy. For us to frame for ourselves *rules of ratiocination*,[21] or to have our minds embondaged to those of other men's invention and observation, thinking we can absolutely reduce all the reasonings in the Scripture to them, we may fall into a presumptuous mistake. In the consideration of all the effects of infinite wisdom, there must be an allowance for the deficiency of our comprehension. Humble subjection of conscience, and captivating our understandings to the obedience of faith, is the best means of learning what is proposed to us. There is nothing more contemptible than the *arrogance* of

those persons who think to fathom the depths of Scripture senses, by the willow measures [22] and short lines of their own weak, dark, and imperfect reasoning.

Again; whatever sense any man supposes or judges this or that particular place of Scripture to yield or give, to the best of his rational intelligence, is immediately to give way to the *analogy of faith* — that is, to the Scripture's own declaration of its sense in other places to another purpose, or contrary to it. The lack of attending to men's duty in this, with a *mixture of pride and stubbornness*, is the occasion for most errors and noxious opinions in the world. For when some have taken up a private interpretation of any place of Scripture, if they do not submit their conception to the authority of the Scripture in the declaration of its own mind in other places, doing so *before* they have thoroughly imbibed and vented it (even though they seem to be greatly satisfied in it, and full of it), there is but small hope of their recovery. This is that pride which is the source and origin of *heresy* — namely, when men prefer their *seemingly wise* and rational conceptions of the sense of *particular places*, before the *analogy of faith*.

Moreover, there is a pernicious mistake that some have fallen into about these things. They suppose that by taking in the help of *skill in the original languages* for understanding the words and their use, whether proper or figurative, nothing more is necessary for understanding and interpreting the Scripture than *the sedulous and diligent use of our own reason* in the ordinary way, and according to the common rules of the *art of ratiocination*.

"For what more can be required," they say, "or what more can men make use of? By these means alone, we come to understand the meaning of any other writer, and therefore also of the Scripture. Nor can we, nor does God

require that we should, receive or believe anything except according to our own reason and understanding."

Yet these things, though some of them are partly true in themselves, *as they are used for the end mentioned*, they are perniciously false; for —

(1.) It greatly unbecomes any Christian to suppose there is *no* need *for other assistance*, nor the use of any other means for interpreting the oracles of God, or coming to understand the hidden wisdom of God in the mystery of the gospel, than there is to understanding or interpreting the writings of men, which are the product of a finite, limited, and weak ability. If it were not for some secret persuasion that the Scripture indeed is not what it pretends to be, which is *the word of the living God*, or that it does not indeed express the *highest effect of His wisdom* and deepest counsel of His will, it could not be that men would give way to such foolish imaginations. The principal matter of the Scripture is *mysterious*; and its mysteries are laid up in it by God himself; and that is done in a way that is *inimitable* by the skill or wisdom of men. When we speak of and express the same things according to our own measure of comprehension, in which, from its agreement with the Scripture, what we say is *materially* divine, our words are yet *not* divine. Nor is there the same respect to the things themselves as the expressions of the Scripture have, which are *formally* divine. And can we ourselves trace these paths of wisdom without His special guidance and assistance? It is highly *atheistic* to fancy it.

(2.) We address an interpretation of the Scripture that is *real*, and that is accompanied with an understanding of the things that are proposed and expressed, and not merely of the *notional sense of propositions and expressions*. For we speak of such an interpretation of the Scripture as it is a sanctified means of our *illumination*; nor does the Scripture require nor God

regard any other. It has been demonstrated before, that it is the unique work of the Spirit of God to give this to us, notwithstanding the use and advantage of all outward helps and means.

It is true that we can receive nothing, and reject nothing, as to what is true or false — nor can we conceive the sense of anything — except by our own *reasons* and *understandings*. But the inquiry in this is, What *supernatural aid and assistance* our minds and natural reasons stand in need of, to enable them to rightly receive and understand spiritual and supernatural things. If it is true that no more is required for the due understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures, than the exercise of our own *reasons*, in and by the helps mentioned — namely, *skill in the original languages, the art of ratiocination*, and the like, which are exposed to all in common, according to the measure of their natural abilities and diligence — then the sense of the Scripture, that is, the mind of God and Christ in this, is *equally discernible*, or can be attained, by all sorts of men, good and bad, holy and profane, believers and unbelievers, those who obey the word and those who despise it. This is contrary to all the promises of God and to innumerable other testimonies of Scripture.

1. The second place is on .
2. **Psa 147:19** He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. [20] He has not dealt thus with any nation; And *as for His* judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!
3. **2Kng 18:26** Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to *the* Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand *it*; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who *are* on the wall."
4. **Jer 10:11** Thus you shall say to them: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens."
5. Owen is speaking of the Roman Catholic Church insisting that the Scriptures be kept in Latin, which is a dead language.
6. **1Tim 6:20** O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust; **2Tim 1:14** That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.
7. These statements are founded on those views respecting the functions and tendency of biblical criticism in which, by universal admission, Owen, in common with most theologians of his age, altogether erred. We need not consider his opinions on the subject under the incidental reference to them above. He refers to his writings in controversy with Brian Walton; for which see vol. xvi. of his works. His argument proceeds on the supposition that, by a continuous miracle, extending over ages, every point and letter of Scripture have been indubitably preserved as they came from the inspired penmen. But it is a necessary condition of the argument, that what he

alleges or assumes, respecting the miraculous preservation of all the letters and words of Scripture, should be true. If it is not true, and if there really is higher evidence for the unique claims of the Word in the fact that, with the common liabilities of all manuscripts to corruption, it exists in such accuracy and perfection, greater reverence is shown to it in critical efforts to weed out all remaining errata by the collation of manuscripts, than by slothful acquiescence in the text, without any attempt to ascertain on what authority it must be received as the actual text of inspiration. — Ed. See *The Preservation of God's Word*, . When Goold wrote this comment (1853), Westcott-Hort had yet to begin their quest for a definitive collection of manuscripts, known as the "Critical Text" (1881), distinct from the textual criticism which Goold describes and rightly defends here. – WHG

8. "Interpretis officium est, non quid ipse velit, sed quid sentiat ille quem interpretatur, exponere," Hieron. *Apol. adv. Rufin*. "The duty of the translator is not to say what he wants, but to explain the sense of what he translates." *This quote is not in the "Apology Against Rufinus." But elsewhere in it, Jerome says that the function of a* ***commentary***, "is to interpret another man's words, to put into plain language what he has expressed obscurely." Bk I, sec. 16. – WHG

9. *Cognation*: a line of descent; a derivative correlation.

10. **Tit 3:10** Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition; — the gloss is, "a heretical man… is to be killed." *Devitare* in Latin ("avoid" or "reject") was taken by Dr. John Colet (1467-1519) to mean the same as *de vita tolle*, "to kill, or take away life."

11. *Ordinal* – the preceding or source language. Tyndale (*Obedience of a Christian Man*) complained that the Roman Catholics demanded all modern translations be made from Jerome's Latin Vulgate – which was itself a

translation from the Greek and Hebrew. Tyndale argued for doing a fresh translation from the original languages, as being easier and more accurate. – WHG

12. *Signal*: notable, or out of the ordinary; exceptional.

13. Originally, "humour" – a primary motivation or desire.

14. *Ostentation*: a tasteless outward display.

15. *Imprecation*: the act of calling down a curse that invokes evil.

16. *Farced*: stuffed, as with a turkey.

17. That is, they "go after" the underlying source text, altering it – rather than merely translating it. – WHG

18. *Sally*: a venture off the beaten path.

19. *Chimera*: a grotesque product of the imagination.

20. *Supernumerary*: more than is needed, desired, or required.

21. *Ratiocination*: Logical and methodical reasoning.

22. *Willow measure* – a hand-made ruler created by carving notches in a stick; the increments are unique to that stick. – WHG

Chapter IX. Ecclesiastical Helps in the interpretation of the Scripture.

Thirdly. There are means and helps for the interpretation of the Scripture which I call *ecclesiastical*. I mean those which we are supplied with by the *ministry of the church* in all ages. And they may be referred to three heads, under which their usefulness to this purpose is pleaded: which are —

1. *Catholic or universal tradition*;

2. *Consent of the fathers*;

3. *The endeavors of any persons holy and learned* who have gone before us in the investigation of the truth, and expressed their minds in writing, for the edification of others, whether *of old* or *of late*.

These things belong to the ministry of the church. And so far as they do, they are sanctified ordinances for the communication of the mind of God to us.

1. It is pleaded by some that the Scripture is to be interpreted according to *catholic tradition*, and not otherwise. And I acknowledge that we should be inexpressibly obliged to those who would give us an interpretation of the

whole Scripture, or of *any book in the Scripture*, or of *any one passage in the Scripture*, relating to things of mere supernatural revelation, according to that *rule*, or by the guidance and direction of it. But I fear no such tradition can be evidenced, unless it is of things that are manifest in the light of nature, whose universal preservation is an effect of the unavoidable reason of mankind, and not of any *ecclesiastical* tradition. Moreover, the Scripture itself is testified to be the word of God, unanimously and uninterruptedly by all Christians.

And hereby, all divine truths are conveyed down from their original, and delivered to us. But a *collateral tradition* of any one truth or doctrine besides that of Christ and the apostles, cannot be proved. And if it could be proved, it would not be a means of the interpretation of the Scripture except *objectively*, as one place of Scripture interprets another — that is, it would belong to the *analogy of faith*, contrary to which, or in opposition to which, no place ought to be interpreted. It is foolish, therefore, to pretend that this is the rule of the interpretation of Scripture *actively, as* though we could certainly learn the meaning of Scripture by it, in *part or in whole*. And whatever some may boast, no man living can prove his interpretation of any one place to be dictated by or suitable to *universal tradition*, in any other way than as he can prove it to be agreeable to the *Scripture* itself. That is, unless we acknowledge, without proof, that what the mind and sense is of some men who call themselves "The Church" at present, was the mind of Christ and his apostles, and of all true believers since then; and that it is infallibly so. But this pretense has been abundantly and sufficiently disproved — though nothing seems to be proved to the minds of men who are fortified against all evidences of truth, by invincible prejudices.

2. *The joint consent of the fathers* or ancient doctors of the church is also pretended as a rule of Scripture interpretation. But those who make this *plea* are apparently influenced by their supposed interest in doing so. No man of ingenuousness who has ever read or considered them, or any of them, with attention and judgment, can abide by this pretense. For it is utterly impossible that they should be an *authentic rule* for others, if they so disagree among themselves, as they will be found to do — not so much in *articles of faith*, maybe, as in their *exposition of Scripture*, which is the matter under consideration. About the former, they express themselves diversely; in the latter they *really differ*, and frequently. Those who seem most earnestly to press this dogma upon us, are those of the *church of Rome.* Yet it is hard to find one learned man among them who has undertaken to expound or write *commentaries* on the Scripture, that on all occasions he gives us the different senses, expositions, and interpretations of the fathers, of the same places and texts; and that is where any difficulty occurs perpetually. But the pretense of the *authoritative determination* of the *fathers* in points of religion has been so disproved, and the vanity of it is so fully revealed, that it is altogether needless to further insist on it. Those who seem to have discovered a middle way between their *determining authority* on the one hand, and the *efficacy* of their *reasons* on the other — with a due veneration for their piety and ability (which all sober men allow) — only trifle. They speak words whose sense neither they nor any others can understand.

3. We therefore say that the sole use of *ecclesiastical means* in the interpretation of the Scripture is in the due consideration and improvement of that *light, knowledge, and understanding* in, and those *gifts* for, the declaration of the mind of God in the Scripture. This is what he has granted

to and furnished them with, who have gone before us in the *ministry* and work of the gospel. God in a special manner, in all ages, took care that the doctrine of the gospel should be preached *viva voce* (vocally) to the present edification of the body of the church. So likewise, almost from the beginning of its propagation in the world, and shortly after the decease of the apostles and that whole divinely-inspired society of preachers and writers, he stirred up and enabled various persons to declare by *writing*, what their apprehensions were, and what *understanding* God had given them in and about the sense of the Scripture. Of those who designedly wrote comments and expositions on any part of the Scripture, Origen was the first. His fooleries and mistakes — occasioned by the prepossession of his mind with *platonic philosophy*, confidence in his own great abilities (which indeed were singular and admirable), along with the curiosity of a speculative mind — did not discourage others from endeavoring, with more sobriety and better success, to write entire expositions on some parts of the Scripture. Among the Greeks were Chrysostom, Theodoret, Aretine, Oecumenius, and Theophylact. Among the Latins were Jerome, Ambrose, Austin, and others. These have been followed, used, and improved by innumerable others in succeeding ages. Especially since the Reformation, the work has been carried on with general success, and to the great advantage of the church. Yet it has not proceeded so far but that the best, most useful, and profitable labor in the Lord's vineyard which any holy and learned man can engage himself in, is to endeavor to contribute further light in the opening and exposition of Scripture, or any part of it.

Now, all these are singular helps and advantages to the right understanding of the Scripture. They have the same kind of advantage as to that single end of light and knowledge, which preaching the word is, if used

with sobriety, judgment, and a due examination of all, by the text itself. As for the *exposition of the fathers*, it is a ridiculous imagination, which would oblige us to believe contradictions and open mistakes, for any man to *authenticate* them so far as to bind us to an assent to their conceptions and dictates, just because they are the fathers. Even so, they will not be despised by any but those who have not been conversant in them. It is easy to discern from them all, by the diversity of their gifts, ways, and designs in the exposition of Scripture, that the Holy Spirit distributed to them as he pleased.

Just as this should make us revere his presence with them, and his assistance to them, so it calls for the freedom of our own judgments to be exercised about their conceptions. As for those of *latter* days, the names of the principal and most eminent of them include Bucer, Calvin, Martyr, and Beza. Their names are now condemned and despised by many — mostly by those who never once seriously attempted the exposition of any chapter in the whole Scripture. Yet those who firmly design to grow in the knowledge of God and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, do and will always bless God for the assistance he gave these men in their great and holy works, and in the benefit which they will receive by their labors.

These are the outward means and advantages which are requisite as helps to attain a right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture. And they are to be used as anyone's calling, opportunity, ability, and work require. Now, concerning them all I will only say that the Spirit of God makes them useful and prosperous according to the counsel of his own will. In their use, some are prone to lean on their own understandings, and consequently to wander in and after the imaginations of their own minds, thereby corrupting the word of God, and endeavoring to pervert his right ways. Others he

leaves in the *shell of the text*, to exercise their skill about words, phrases, and expressions, without leading them into the spiritual sense of the word, which is its life and power. In some, he blesses these means to their full and proper end, but not unless they are in compliance with the spiritual means and duties insisted on before.

From what has been discussed concerning the work of the Spirit of God in revealing to believers the mind of God in the Scriptures, or the sense of that *revelation* made of it in the Scriptures, two things seem to follow —

First. That those who do not have that *assistance* granted to them, or that work of his wrought in them, cannot understand or apprehend the truth or doctrine of faith and obedience revealed in the Scripture. For if that work of the Spirit is necessary to this, which they are *not* made partakers of, then how can they come to any knowledge or understanding in it?

Secondly. That those who are so influenced and guided *must understand the whole Scripture rightly*, and be freed from all mistakes in their conceptions about the mind of God.

Both of these are contrary to the experience of all men in all ages. Many persons are visibly destitute of any saving work of the Holy Ghost on their minds, as is evident in that no renovation or reformation of life ensues from it. And yet they have *attained a great acquaintance with the truth* as it is revealed in the word. And there are many who are *truly enlightened and sanctified* by the Spirit, and yet they fall into various *errors* and mistakes, which the differences and divisions among them openly proclaim. The Scripture itself supposes that there may be *diversity of judgment* about spiritual things among those who are really sanctified and believers.

A brief answer to both these exceptions will lead this discourse to its close. I therefore say to the first:

1. That there are in the declaration of the mind of God in the Scriptures, various things that are common *to other writings*, both as to their matter and the manner of their delivery. Such are the *stories* of times past that are recorded in it, the *computation of times*, the use of words, *phrases of speech* both *figurative and proper, artificial* connections of discourse, *various sorts of arguments*, and the like — all of which anyone may come to the understanding of, and be able to make a right judgment concerning, without any special assistance of the Holy Spirit. The things about which they are conversant, [1] are the proper object of the reasonable faculties of the mind, provided there is a common blessing on their endeavors and exercise.

2. The *main doctrines* of truth declared in the Scripture are proposed in such distinct, *plain enunciations*, in propositions accommodated to the understandings of rational men, that persons who use *disciplinary* and *ecclesiastical helps* may learn, know, and understand the sense, meaning, and truth of the doctrines that are so proposed and declared to them, without any special work of *saving illumination* on their minds. That is, if they attend to the study of them without prejudice, or prepossession by false notions and opinions, and with freedom from the bias of carnal and secular interests and advantages, and from the leaven of tradition. The propositions of truth in the Scripture — I mean those which are necessary to the great ends of the Scripture — are so plain and evident in themselves, that it is the fault and sin of all men who are endowed with rational abilities, if they do not perceive them, and do not assent to them upon the evidence of their truth or of the mind of God, in those places of Scripture in which they are declared. This is the substance of what we plead against the *Papists* concerning the *perspicuity of the Scripture*.

3. Considering the *natural vanity* of the mind of man — its proneness to error and false imaginations, the weakness of judgment with which it is accompanied in all things — whatever it attains in the knowledge of truth, is to be ascribed to the guidance of the Spirit of God, although not working in or upon the mind by a communication of saving light and grace; for,

4. The knowledge of truth thus to be attained is not that *illumination* which we are inquiring into; nor does it produce those effects of renewing the mind, and transforming it into the image of the things known, with the fruits of holy obedience, which are inseparable from saving illumination.

In answer to the second pretended consequence of what we have discussed, I say —

1. That the promise of the Spirit, and accordingly the communication of him, to *teach, instruct*, guide, and lead us into truth, is suited to that *great end* for which God has made the revelation of himself in his word — namely, that we might live to him here according to his will, and be brought to the enjoyment of him hereafter, to his glory.

2. That to this end, it is not necessary that we understand the *direct sense and meaning of every single text*, place, or passage in the Scripture, nor that we should obtain the knowledge of every thing revealed in it. It suffices, in answer to the promise and design of the work of the Holy Ghost, that the *knowledge of all truth necessary to be known to that end, is communicated* to us, and that we have a right understanding of the sense of the Scripture, so far as to learn that truth by the use of the means appointed to that end.

3. We are not hereby *absolutely secured* from particular errors and mistakes, no more than we are from all actual sins by the work of the Spirit on our wills. While we live in this world, both kinds only have a *tendency* towards perfection. There is no faculty of our souls that is absolutely and

perfectly renewed in this life. But the *wills* of believers are so far renewed and changed by grace, as to preserve them from *those sins* which are inconsistent with a holy life according to the tenor of the covenant. Yet this leaves a possibility of many infirmities and actual sins. So too, their *minds* are so far renewed as to know and assent to all truths *necessary to our life of obedience*, and a right understanding of the Scripture in which they are revealed. Yet this may be consistent with many mistakes, errors, and false apprehensions, to our great damage and disadvantage. But with this must be added that the teachings of the Spirit of God as to all divine truths whatsoever — both in their *objective revelation* in the word, and in the *assistance* he gives us by his light and grace to perceive and understand the mind and whole counsel of God in that revelation — are such that, it is not without our own *guilt*, as well as from our own *weakness*, that we fall into errors and misapprehensions about any Scripture proposals that concern our duty to God. And if all who believe would freely forego all prejudices or preconceived opinions, and cast off all impressions from worldly considerations and secular advantages — giving themselves up humbly and entirely to the teaching of God in the ways of his own appointment, some of which have been insisted on before — we might "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," Eph 4.13. These things may suffice to illustrate the work of the Holy Ghost in our *illumination*, with respect to the external objective cause of this, or the holy Scripture itself.

The Preservation of God's Word

There is yet another work of the Holy Ghost with respect to the Scripture, which although it does not fall directly under the present consideration of

the *ways and means of saving illumination*, yet the whole of what we have discussed is so resolved into it, in the order of an external cause, that it may justly claim a remembrance in this place. And this is his *watchful care over the written word*, in preserving it from destruction and corruption, from its first writing to this very day.

It is sufficiently evinced that it has been under the special care of God, not only by the event of its entire preservation, considering the opposition it has been exposed to, but also by the testimony of our Savior as to the *books of the Old Testament*; and those of the New are certainly of no less esteem or use: Mat 5.18, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle will in no way pass from the law." The context declares that the *law* means the whole writings of the Old Testament. And what he affirms — that it will not by any means pass away, i.e., not be abolished or corrupted — he takes upon himself to preserve and secure it. The Scripture in itself is subject to two things:

1. *Destruction* or *abolition*, as to the whole or any necessary part of it.

2. *Corruption of the writing*, by changes, alterations, and falsifications in its copies.

And both of these have been attempted, both before and since the time of the promulgation of the gospel, the stories of which are known. And yet it came off safe from all, not only without *ruin*, but without *wound* or *blemish*. For anyone to suppose that this has been done by chance, or by the care of men alone, without the special watchful providence and powerful actings of the Spirit of God, in the pursuit of the promise of Christ that it shall not fail — which expressed a care that God had taken on himself to make good from the beginning [2] — neglects the consideration of the nature of all human affairs. It neglects the revolutions they are subject to, and the deceit

and violence with which the Scriptures have been attacked, with the insufficiency of the powers and diligence employed for their preservation. It also countenances the *atheistic notion* that God has no special regard for his word and worship in the world. Indeed, for a man to think and profess that the Scripture is the word of God, given to men for the ends which it declares, and of that use for which it must exist, and not believe that God has always taken special care of its preservation — of its purity and integrity, beyond the ordinary ways of his providence in the rule of all other things — is to be senseless and foolish, and to entertain thoughts of God (of his goodness, wisdom, and power), that are infinitely unworthy of Him and them.

Of late, some opinions have been invented and maintained concerning the *integrity and purity* of the Scriptures. I conceive these take away from the reverence of that relation which the Scripture has in its integrity and purity, to the care and glory of God. Hence, some maintain that some books written by divine inspiration, and given to the church as part of its canon (or rule of faith and obedience), are utterly lost and perished. They say that the *law and Scripture* of the Old Testament before the *captivity*, though written in the Hebrew tongue (which they say was not originally the language of Abraham, derived from Eber, but of the posterity of Ham in Canaan), are not in the *letters* or *characters* which are now in use; but were written in those which a few wicked idolaters called *Samaritans* used and possessed. These were left to them by Ezra; and new characters were invented by him, or borrowed from the Chaldeans for the use of the church. They say that the *vowels and accents*, by which alone the true reading and sense of it is preserved, are a late invention of some Masoretic rabbins. And they say that the *original text* is corrupted in many places; and so it may and ought to be

corrected by translations, especially that of the LXX. And there are various other such imaginations, which they countenance with uncertain conjectures and fabulous stories.

I cannot help but wonder how some seem to take *shelter in their opinions*, especially that of preferring the *translation of the LXX* to the original Hebrew text, or as they foolishly say, "the present copy of it" in the church of England, whose *publicly authorized and excellent translation* takes no more notice of that translation, nor has any more regard for it when it differs from the Hebrew (as it does in a thousand places), than if it had never been in the world. No translations are in common use in the whole world except those that were directly translated out of the Hebrew original, except for *some part of the vulgar Latin*. I truly believe that those very Christians who contend that a *preference* be given to the LXX — now that they have gotten their ends, or at least attempted them, in procuring a reputation for learning, skill, and cunning, by their *writings about it* — would not dare to advise that a translation be made and composed from that, for the use of that church which they adhere to (be that what it will), to the rejection and exclusion of that which was taken from the original. And to have *two* recommended for common use, so discrepant as they would be found to be, would certainly be of more disadvantage to the church than they can compensate for by all their endeavors otherwise. Indeed, I am apt to think that they will not be very urgent for an alteration to the *church's translation* in those particular instances in which they hope they have won themselves a great reputation in proving the *mistakes of the Hebrew*, and in manifesting how it may be rectified by the *translation* of the LXX. For whatever thoughts may be in their minds concerning their learned disputes,

I have no doubt that they have more reverence for God and his word, than to assault it with such violence, on any pretense whatever.

Therefore, just as the integrity and purity of the Scripture in the *original languages* may be proved and defended against all opposition, with whatever else belongs to it, so we must ascribe their preservation to the watchful care and powerful operation of the Spirit of God, absolutely securing them throughout all generations

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1. That is, which such persons are familiar with.
2. **Psa 12:6** "The words of the LORD *are* pure words, *Like* silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times. [7] You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever." – though this is variously translated. – WHG

Book VII. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer.

Monergism Books

Book VII. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer.

A DISCOURSE
OF
THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER AS THE SPIRIT OF GRACE AND SUPPLICATIONS, AND THE DUTY OF BELIEVERS IN THIS;
WITH A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO
THE NATURE AND USE OF MENTAL PRAYER AND FORMS.
London:
1682.

Prefatory note.

The preface to the following treatise is of some interest as an earnest pleading against liturgical impositions on four different grounds; as having been instrumental: (1) in securing, at an early period, currency for the errors of the great apostasy; (2) in introducing the gorgeous embellishments of carnal fancy into the pure worship of the Christian religion; (3) in tempting ecclesiastical authorities to employ civil penalties in matters of faith; and (4) in leading to the cessation of spiritual and ministerial gifts in the church. The treatise itself unfolds the evidence and nature of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in prayer, and it would be esteemed meagre and incomplete if it were regarded as a treatise on the whole subject of prayer. To understand its precise scope, it must be considered simply as another book in the general work of our author on the dispensation and operations of the Holy Spirit. Given that the subsidiary discussions on the mental prayer of the church of Rome, and the use of devotional formulas, are evidently connected with the particular and

distinctive object of the treatise, it is designed to illustrate the operations of the Spirit in the devotional exercises of believers.

Analysis.

The object of the discourse is explained. Its two main divisions are: I. The evidence of a special work of the Spirit in prayer and praise; and, II. The illustration of the nature of this work, (ch. 1).

I. The *evidence* of its reality consists in a minute explanation of two passages in Scripture, Zec 12.10 and Gal 4.6 (ch. 2, 3).

II. Its *general nature* is considered — prayer being defined as a spiritual faculty of exercising Christian graces in the way of vocal requests and supplications to God (ch. 4). The work of the Spirit in the matter of prayer is reviewed in greater detail: as enlightening us into a perception of our spiritual wants; acquainting us with the promises of grace and mercy for our relief; and leading us to express desires for any blessing according to its right and proper ends, (ch. 5). His work as to the manner of prayer is described: as disposing us to obey God in this duty; implanting holy and gracious desires for the objects sought; giving us delight in God as the object of prayer; and keeping us intent on Christ as the way and ground of acceptance, (ch. 6). The manner of prayer is further considered with special

reference to Eph 6.18, (ch. 7). In the course of an argument on the duty of external prayer, the promise of the Spirit is exhibited as superseding the necessity of recourse to external forms, on the following grounds:

1. The natural obligation to call on God according to our ability;

2. The example of the saints in Scripture;

3. The circumstance that in all the commands to pray, there is no respect to outward helps;

4. The existence of certain means for the improvement of our gift in prayer;

5. The use to which our natural faculties of invention, memory, and elocution, are thus put; and,

6. The necessary exercise of our spiritual abilities, (ch. 8).

Certain duties are inferred from the preceding discourse:

1. The ascription to God of all the glory on account of any gift in prayer; and,

2. Constant attention to the duty of prayer, (ch. 9).

Two subsidiary discussions follow:

1. A searching exposure of the *mental prayer* recommended by the Church of Rome, in which prayer is merged into spiritual contemplation, without any succession and utterance of thought; it is shown that language is no interference with the workings of devotional sentiment, but serves, on the contrary, to define the objects of thought, and enhance the power of conception, (ch. 10): and,

2. A disquisition [1] on the use and value of forms: the mere use of them by some men (as suited to their attainments and experience) is distinguished from their alleged necessity for purposes of worship; and against the latter these objections are urged:

1. There is no promise of the Spirit to assist in the composition of prayers for others;

2. The Spirit is promised that we may be helped, not to compose prayers, but to pray;

3. Forms of prayer are not an institution either of the law or the gospel;

4. The alleged practical benefit held to result from them is very questionable inasmuch as those who have the gift of prayer do not need them, and those deficient in the gift, if believers, have the promise of it, and they can only cultivate it by actual exercise;

5. There are better ways in which we may have the matter of prayer suggested to us; and,

6. In the light of experience, forms of prayer are not so conducive to spiritual benefit as the exercise of the gift. Lastly,

7. Some arguments for forms of prayer from instances occurring in Scripture are considered and set aside, (ch. 11).

— Ed.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER

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1. *Disquisition*: an elaborate analytical or explanatory essay or discussion.

Preface to the reader.

IT is altogether needless to premise anything here concerning the necessity, benefit, and use of prayer in general. All men will readily acknowledge that without it, there can be no religion at all. So too, the life and exercise of all religion principally consists in this. Therefore, that way and profession in religion which gives the best directions for prayer, with the most effectual motives for it, and which most abounds in its observance, has an advantage in this over all others. Hence it also follows that all errors which either pervert its nature, or countenance the neglect of a due attendance to it, are pernicious in religion. And so, differences in opinion, and disputes about any of its vital concerns, can only be a dangerous and evil consequence of such errors. For on each hand, these pretend to an immediate regulation of Christian practice in a matter of the highest importance to the glory of God, and to the salvation of the souls of men. And thus, there is nothing more requisite in our religion than to have true apprehensions of prayer's nature and use be preserved in the minds of men.

The declaration and defense of these, when they are opposed or unduly maligned, is not only justifiable, but also necessary.

This is the design of the ensuing discourse. In the Scripture, there is a promise that the Holy Ghost would be given to the church as "a Spirit of grace and of supplications." Zec 12.10 As such, particular operations are ascribed to him. Mention is likewise frequently made of the aids and assistances which he affords to believers in and to their prayers. Hence they are said to "pray always with all prayer and supplication *in the Spirit*." Eph 6.18 Some profess that they have experienced the lack of these aids and assistances to enable them to pray according to the mind of God; and also of their efficacy to that end, when these aids are indeed received. Accordingly, these persons regulate themselves in this whole duty, in the expectation or improvement of such aids. And there are those who, being accommodated to the same purpose by *other* aids of *another* nature — which they consider sufficient for themselves — look at the former testimony, and plead that the ability to pray by the aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit, is a mere empty pretense.

And in the management of these different apprehensions, those who are at variance seem to be almost barbarians to one another — the one not being able to understand what the other vehemently affirms. For they are determined in their minds, not merely by notions of truth and falsehood, but by the experience which they have of the things themselves, a sense and understanding of which they can by no means communicate to one another. For just as the spiritual experience of truth is above all other demonstrations to those who enjoy it, so it cannot be made an argument for enlightening and convicting others. Hence those who plead for prayer by virtue of supplies of gifts and grace from the Holy Spirit, wonder that the use or

necessity of them in this should be contradicted. Nor can they understand what others intend, who seem to deny that it is every man's duty in all his circumstances, to pray as well as he can, and to make use of the assistance of the Spirit of God in doing so.

And by "prayer" they mean that which the most eminent and only proper meaning of the word denotes; namely, *vocal* prayer. Some, on the other side, are so far from understanding these things, or having a conviction of their reality, that they despise and reproach their pretense with the highest confidence. To "pray in the Spirit" is used as a notable expression of scorn, the thing signified being considered foolish and contemptible.

Moreover, in such cases as this, men are apt to run into excesses in things and ways which they judge are expedient, either to countenance their own opinions, or to depress and decry the opinions of others with whom they differ. No instances can be given in this kind of greater extravagances, than in that under consideration. For it is from this that some ascribe the origin of *free prayer* among us, by the assistance of the Spirit of God, to the Jesuits, as an invention of theirs. This is no doubt to make them the authors of the Bible. And others avow that all forms of prayer used among us in public worship, are mere traductions [1] from the Roman Breviaries and Missal. [2] But these things will be spoken to afterward. They are mentioned here only to evince the use of a sedate inquiry into the truth or the mind of God in this matter; which is the design of the ensuing discourse.

What should principally guide us in the management of this inquiry is that it be done for spiritual advantage and edification, without strife or contention. Now, this cannot be done without a diligent and constant attendance to the two sole rules of judgment in this — namely, Scripture revelation, and the experience of those who believe. For experience is to be

regulated by the Scripture; and where this is so, it is a safe rule for those in whom it is experienced. And in this case, as face reflects face in water, so Scripture revelation and spiritual experience reflect one another. All other reasonings, from customs, traditions, and feigned consequences, are of no use here. The inquiries before us concern the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the aids and assistances which he gives to believers in and for their prayers, according to the mind of God. And also, what the effects and fruits of his work are, or what the spiritual abilities are which are communicated to them by it. Antecedent to this, it should be inquired whether there is indeed any such thing or not; or whether they are only vainly pretended to by some who are deceived. But because the determination of this depends absolutely on the foregoing inquiries, it may be handled jointly with them, and it needs no distinct consideration. The one who would not deceive nor be deceived in his inquiry about these things, must diligently attend to the two forementioned rules, of Scripture testimony and experience; he has no other safe guides. Yet it will also be granted that much direction may be given for understanding those testimonies and examining that experience, from the light of nature. This is where this duty springs from, in which it is founded, and from which it cannot vary as to its essence. Direction also springs from generally-received principles of religion suited to it, with the uncorrupted practice of the church of God in former ages.

Therefore, the foundation of the whole ensuing discourse is laid in the consideration and exposition of *some* of those texts of Scripture in which these things are expressly revealed and proposed to us. For to assert them *all* would be endless. We principally labor in this, as that by which not only must the controversy be finally determined, but the persons who manage it be eternally judged. What is added concerning the experience of those who

believe the truth in this, claims no more for its argument (for those who do not have that experience) than it has evidence proceeding from and suited to those divine testimonies. But because the things that belong to it are of great moment to those who enjoy it, because it contains the principal acts, ways, and means of our intercourse and communion with God by Christ Jesus, they are somewhat at large, and on all occasions, insisted on here for the edification of those whose concern lies only in the practice of the duty itself.

Therefore, unless it can be proved that the testimonies of the Scripture produced and insisted on do not contain that sense and understanding which the words determinately express (for only that is pleaded), or that some have not experienced the truth and power of that sense of them, enabling them to live to God in this duty accordingly, all other contests about this matter are vain and useless.

Yet there is no such work of the Holy Spirit pleaded in this, that is absolutely inconsistent with or condemnatory of all those outward aids of prayer by set composed forms, which are made use of almost everywhere. For this device is ancient; and it is generally received in the Christian world in some degree or measure (though in many things, a no less general apostasy from the rule of truth, at the same time and in the same persons and places, cannot be denied). Therefore, I will not judge what advantage formal prayer may be or has been to the souls of men; nor what acceptance they have found in this, where it is not abused too much. The substance of what we plead from Scripture and experience is only this:

That because God has graciously promised his Holy Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplications to those who believe, enabling them to pray according to his mind and will in all the circumstances and capacities in

which they are or may be called to, it is the duty of those who are enlightened with the truth of this, to expect those promised aids and assistances in and for their prayers, and to pray according to the ability which they receive thereby.

To deny that this is their duty, or to deprive them of their liberty to discharge it on all occasions, rises up in direct opposition to the divine instruction of the sacred word.

But moreover, as intimated before, there are some generally-allowed principles which, though not always duly considered, cannot at any time be modestly denied. They give direction for the right performance of our duty in this, which are these that follow:

1. *It is the duty of every man to pray for himself.* The light of nature, multiple divine commands, with our necessary dependence on God and subjection to him, give life and light to this principle. To own a Divine Being, is to own that which is to be prayed to, and it is our duty to do so. [3]

2. *It is the duty of some, by virtue of a natural relation or office, to pray with and for others also*. Thus it is the duty of parents and master*s* of families [4] to pray with and for their children and households. This also derives from those great principles of natural light that God is to be worshipped in all societies of his own erection, and that those in the relationships mentioned are obliged to seek the highest good of those who are committed to their care; and so it is frequently enjoined in the Scripture. In like manner, it is the duty of ministers to pray with and for their flocks, by virtue of special institution. These things cannot be nor are they questioned by any, so far as I know of. But practically, most men live in open neglect of their duty in this. If it were but diligently attended to, from the first instance of natural and moral relationships to the instituted offices

of ministers and public teachers, we would have fewer contests about the nature and manner of praying than we have at present. It is holy *practice* that must reconcile differences in religion, or they will never be reconciled in this world.

3. *Everyone who prays, either by himself and for himself, or with others and for them*, is obliged as to all the uses, properties, and circumstances of prayer, to pray as well as he is able. For by the light of nature, everyone is obliged in all instances to serve God with his best. The confirmation and exemplification of this, was one end of the institution of sacrifices under the Old Testament.

For it was ordained in them that the chief and best of everything was to be offered to God. Neither the nature of God nor our own duty towards him will allow us to expect any acceptance with him, unless our design is to serve him with the best that we have, both for matter and manner. So the mind of God himself is declared in the prophet: "If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? You brought what was torn, and the lame, and the sick: should I accept this from your hand? says the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which has in his flock a male, and vows and sacrifices to the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen," Mal 1.8, 13, 14.

4. *In our reasonable service, the best with which we can serve God consists in the intense, sincere actings of the faculties and affections of our minds, according to their respective powers, through the use of the best assistances we can attain*. And if we omit or forego the exercise of them, in any instance, according to the utmost of our present ability, we offer to God the sick and the lame. If men can take it on themselves, in the sight of God,

that the invention and use of set forms of prayer (and other similar outward modes of divine worship) are the best he has endowed them with for his service, they are free from the force of this consideration.

5. *There is no man who, in the use of the aids which God has prepared for that purpose, is not able to pray according to the will of God, and as he is obliged by duty, whether he prays by himself and for himself, or with others and for them also*. Perfection is not attainable by these means in the performance of any duty, nor can all attain the same measure and degree as to the usefulness of prayer and manner of praying. But everyone may attain that in which he will be accepted with God, and according to the duty to which he is obliged, whether personally or by virtue of any relation in which he stands to others. To suppose that God requires duties of men which they cannot perform in an acceptable manner, by virtue and in the use of those aids which he has prepared and promised to that end, is to reflect dishonor on His goodness and wisdom in his commands. Therefore, no man is obliged to pray in any circumstances, by virtue of any relation or office, unless he is able to do so according to what is required of him. And what he is not able to do, he is not called to.

6. *We are expressly commanded to pray, but we are nowhere commanded to make* [i.e., *write*] *prayers for ourselves, much less for others*. This is superadded for a supposed convenience to the light of nature and Scripture institution.

7. *There is assistance promised to believers to enable them to pray according to the will of God; but there is no assistance promised to enable anyone to make prayers for others*. The former part of this assertion is explained and proved in the ensuing discourse, and the latter cannot be disproved. If it were granted that the work of composing prayers for others

is a good work, falling under the general aids of the Holy Spirit necessary for every good work whatever, those are still not aids of the same kind and nature as his actual assistances in and for prayer, as he is the Spirit of grace and supplications. For in the use of those assistances by grace and gifts, every man who uses them actually prays; nor are they otherwise to be used. But men do not pray in making and composing forms of prayer, though they may do so in reading them afterward.

8. *Whatever forms of prayer were given for the use of the church by divine authority and inspiration, such as the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms or Prayers of David, they are to have their everlasting use in this, according to what they were designed for*. Whatever their end and use, they can give no more warranty for human compositions to the same end, nor for the injunction of their use, than there is for other human writings to be added to the Scripture.

These and like principles, which are evident in their own light and truth, will be of use to direct us in the argument in hand, so far as our present design is concerned in this. For it is the vindication of our own principles and practice that is principally designed, and not an opposition to those of other men. Therefore, as intimated before, neither these principles nor the divine testimonies which we will more largely insist on, are engaged to condemn all use of set forms of prayers as sinful in themselves, or absolutely unlawful, or as vitiating the worship of God so as to render it wholly unacceptable in those who choose to so worship him. For God will accept those who sincerely seek him, even though, through invincible ignorance, they mistake in various things as to the way and manner of his worship. How far this rule may extend as to particular instances of miscarriage, only God knows, and whatever they pretend, no man knows.

And where any believers worship God in Christ with an evident holy fear and sincerity, and walk in a way of life that corresponds to the rule of the gospel, even though they have manifold corruptions in the way of their worship, I will never judge severely either about their present acceptance with God, or their future eternal condition. This is a safe rule with respect to others. Our own rule is to attend with all diligence to what God has revealed concerning his worship, and to absolutely comply with it. Without this, we can neither please him nor come to the enjoyment of him.

I also acknowledge that the general prevalence in Christian assemblies of set forms of prayer of human invention, used for many ages (more than any other argument that is urged for their necessity), requires a tenderness in judgment as to their whole nature, and the acceptance of those by whom they are used in the duty of prayer. Yet, seeing that it is not warranted by the Scriptures, nor by apostolic example, nor countenanced by the practice of the primitive churches, no consideration of this usage ought to hinder us from discerning and judging the evils and inconveniences that have ensued from it; nor from discovering how far they are unwarrantable as to their imposition. And these evils may be considered a little here.

The *beginnings* of the introduction of set forms of prayer of human composition into the worship of the church, are altogether uncertain. But it is known to all that their reception was progressive, by new additions from time to time. For neither Rome nor the present Roman Missal was built in a day. In that Missal, and in the Breviaries, the whole worship of the church issued, at least in these parts of the world. No man is so foolish as to suppose that they were of one entire composition, the work of one age, of one man, or any assembly of men at the same time, unless they are so brutishly devout as to suppose that the Mass-book was brought from heaven

to the pope by an angel, as the Koran was brought to Mohammed. It is evident, indeed, that common people, at least of the communion of the papal church, believe it to be as much of a divine origin as the Scripture. And that is on the same grounds of its proposal to them by their church, as the only means of divine worship. Hence it is an idol to them. But it is well enough known how from small beginnings, by various accessions, it increased to its present form and station. And this progress — in the reception of devised forms of prayer in the worship of the church — carried along with it various pernicious concomitants, which we may briefly consider:

First, in and by the *additions* made to the first received forms, the superstitious and corrupt doctrines of the apostasy in several ages, were insinuated into the worship of the church. It is acknowledged by all Protestants, and it is sufficiently known, that such superstitious and corrupt doctrines were gradually introduced into the church. Its supposition is the sole foundation of the Reformation.

And by this artifice of new additions to received forms, they were from time to time admitted into and stated in the worship of the church — by which to this very day, they principally preserve their station in the minds of men. If that foundation of them was taken away, they would quickly fall to the ground. By this means, those abominations of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass both leavened and poisoned the whole worship of the public assemblies, and imposed themselves on the credulity of the people. The superstitious and subtle disputes about these things by speculative men would never have infected the minds of the common people of Christians, nor would it ever have been the means of that idolatry which at length spread itself over the whole visible church of these parts of

the world, if this device of *prescribed forms of prayer*, had not been imposed by them on their practice. In these forms, those abominations were not only expressed, but graphically represented and acted on (thus violently affecting the carnal minds of superstitious and ignorant men), which gradually hardened them with an obdurate credulity.

For though they saw no doctrinal ground or reason to believe what was proposed to them about transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, and might easily have seen that they were contradictory to all the conductive principles of men and Christians — namely, faith, reason, and sense — yet they deceived themselves into an obstinate pretense of believing in the notion of the truth of what they had admitted in practice. Men, I say, of corrupt minds might have disputed long enough about vagrant forms, *cause without subjects*, transmutation of *substances without cause, bloody and unbloody sacrifice*, before they had vitiated the whole worship of the church with gross idolatry, if this engine had not been made use of for its introduction, and if the minds of men not been inveigled [5] by this means with its practice. But when the whole matter and its means were gradually insinuated into, and at length comprised in, those forms of prayer which they were obliged to continually use in divine service, their whole soul became leavened and tainted with a confidence in and love for these abominations.

Hence the doctrines concerning the sacraments, and the whole worship of God in the church, became gradually corrupted. They were not at once objectively and doctrinally proposed to the minds and considerations of men, to be received or rejected according to the evidence they had of their truth or error (a method due to the constitution of our nature). But they were gradually insinuated into their practice by additional forms of prayer, which

they considered themselves obliged to use and observe. This was the gilding of the poisonous pill, whose operation (when it was swallowed) was to bereave men of their sense, reason, and faith, and make them madly avow to be true, what was contrary to them all.

Besides, as intimated before, the things themselves that were the groundwork of idolatry — namely, transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass — were so acted out and represented in those forms of worship, as to make a great impression on the minds of carnal men, until they were mad on their idols. For when all religion and devotion is let into the soul by fancy and imagination, and excited by outward spectacles, they will make mad work in the world, as they have done, and continue to do. But I will speak of this in the next place.

It would therefore have been utterly impossible for idolatrous worship to be introduced into the church in general, if the opinion of the necessity of devised forms of prayer had not first been universally received. Or at least, it would not have been so introduced and established as to procure and cause the shedding of the blood of thousands of holy persons for not complying with it. By this means alone, that fatal engine of the church's ruin was brought in, from whose murderous efficacy few escaped with their lives or souls. If all churches had continued in the liberty in which they were placed and left by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, it is still possible that many irregularities might have prevailed in some of them, and many mistakes been admitted into their practice —

yet this monster of the mass, devouring the souls of most, and drinking the blood of many, would never have been conceived or brought forth. At least it would not have been nourished into that terrible form and power in which it appeared and acted for many ages in the world. And on account of

this, it is not without cause that the Jews say the Christians received their *Tephilloth*, or Prayer-books, from *Armillus* — that is, Antichrist. [6]

It is true that when the doctrine of religion is determined and established by civil laws, the laws of the nation where it is professed, as the rule of all outward advantages, liturgies composed in compliance with it are not as subject to this mischief; but this arises from that *external* cause alone. Otherwise, wherever those who have the ordering of these things, deviate from the truth once received (as it is common for most to do), forms of prayers corresponding to those deviations would quickly be insinuated. And the present various liturgies that are among the several sorts of Christians in the world, are of little use other than to establish their minds in their particular errors, which they adhere to by this means, as articles of their faith.

Hereby God allowed contempt to be cast upon the supposed wisdom of men, about his worship and its ways. They would not trust to his institutions and his care of them, but first put the ark into a cart and then, like Uzzah, they put out a hand of force to hold it when it seemed to shake. For it is certain that, if not the first invention, then the first public recommendation and prescription of devised forms of prayer for the practice of the churches, were designed to prevent the insinuation of false opinions and corrupt modes of worship into the public administrations of it. This was feared from persons infected with heresy who might creep into the ministry. So the orthodox and the Arians composed prayers, hymns, and doxologies, one against the other, inserting passages in them confirming their own profession, and condemning that of their adversaries. Now, however this invention might be approved while it kept within bounds, it proved to be the Trojan horse that, in its belly, brought all evils into the city of God. For the

one who was then at work in the mystery of iniquity, laid hold on the engine and occasion, to corrupt those prayers which the churches were obliged and confined to, by the constitution of those who had obtained power in them. This took place effectively in the constitution of the worship of the second race of Christians, or the nations that were converted to the Christian faith after they destroyed the western Roman empire. [7]

To speak briefly and plainly, it was by this means alone — namely, by the necessary use of devised forms of prayer in the assemblies of the church, and by them alone — that the mass, with its transubstantiation and sacrifice, and all the idolatrous worship which accompanied them, were introduced. This continued until the world, inflamed with those idols, drenched itself in the blood of the saints and martyrs of Christ, for their testimony against these abominations. And if it had been discovered sooner that no church was entrusted with power from Christ to frame and impose such devised forms of worship, which are not warranted by the Scripture, innumerable evils might have been prevented. For there were no liturgies composed in the primitive churches, nor was their use imposed, for some ages. This is demonstratively proved with the very same arguments by which we prove that they had neither the mass nor the use of images in their worship. For besides the utter silence about them in the apostolic writings, and those of the next ensuing ages — which is sufficient to discard their pretense to any such antiquity — there are such descriptions given of the practice of the churches in their worship that are *inconsistent* with them, and *exclusive* of them. Besides, they give such a new face to divine worship, that is so different from the portraiture of it delivered in the Scripture, that it is hardly reconcilable to it, and so it was not quickly embraced in the church.

I do not say that this fatal consequence of introducing humanly-devised set forms of prayer in the worship of the church, in the horrible abuse made of it, is sufficient to condemn them as absolutely unlawful. For where the opinions leading to such idolatrous practices are openly rejected and condemned, as intimated before, all the causes, means, and occasions of that idolatry may be taken out and separated from them, as it is in the liturgies of the reformed churches — whether imposed or left free. But it is sufficient to lay in the balance, against that veneration which their general observance in many ages may invite or procure; and it is also sufficient to warrant the disciples of Christ to stand fast in the liberty with which he has made them free.

Another evil which either accompanied or closely followed the introduction of devised forms of prayer into the church, was a *supposed necessity for adorning their observance with various arbitrary ceremonies*. In the end, as confessed among all Protestants, this also increased superstition in its worship, with various practices leading to idolatry. It is evident that the use of *free prayer* in church administrations, can allow no ceremonies except those which are either of divine institution, or are natural circumstances of the actions in which the duties of worship materially consist. Divine institution and natural light are the rules of all that order and decency which is needful for it. But when these *devised* forms were introduced, with a supposition of their necessity, and for sole use in the church in all acts of immediate worship, men quickly found that it was needful to set them off with adventitious [8] ornaments. Upon this, there were gradually discovered and prescribed for constant observation, so many outward postures and gestures — with attires, music, bowings, cringes, crossings, venerations, censings, altars, images, crucifixes, responds,

alternatives, and such a rabble of other ceremonies — that it rendered the whole worship of the church ludicrous, burdensome, and superstitious. And upon this it came to pass that the one who is to officiate in divine service, is obliged to learn and practice so many turnings and windings of himself — eastward and westward, to the altar, to the wall, to the people — so many gestures and postures, in kneeling, rising, standings, bowings, lesser and profound — secret and loud speakings, in a due observance of the interposition of crossings — with moving from one place to another — with provision for attires in their variety of colors, and with respect to all the furnishings of their altars — that these are difficult to learn, and foolishly antic in their practice, above all the preparations of the players for the stage. Injunctions for these and like observances are the subject of the rubric [9] of the Missal and the cautels [10] of the Mass.

For any who ever read the Scripture with due consideration, no proof is needed that these things not only have no affinity with the purity, simplicity, and spirituality of evangelical worship, but they were invented to utterly exclude it from the church, and from the minds of men. Nor is the office of the ministry less corrupted and destroyed by it. For besides a sorry skill in this practice, and reading some forms of words to accommodate these rites, there was little more required for a minister than an easy good intention to do what he does (and not quite the contrary) to make any man or woman (at least as it once was)[1Cor 11.5] fit to administer in all sacred worship.

Having utterly lost the Spirit of grace and supplications, at best neglecting all His aids and assistances, and being void in their minds of all experience of the power and efficacy of prayer by virtue of them, they found it necessary by *these* means to set off and recommend their dead forms. For the lifeless carcass of their forms alone was no more fit to be esteemed

prayer, than a tree or a log was fit to be esteemed a god, before it was shaped, fashioned, gilded, and adorned.

By this means, they taught the *image* of prayer, which they had made to speak and act a part to the satisfaction of the spectators. For the bare reading of a form of words, especially as it was ordered in an unknown tongue, could never have given the least contentment to the multitude, if it had not been set off with this variety of ceremonies, composed to make an appearance of devotion and sacred veneration. Yet, when they had done their utmost, they could never equal the ceremonies and rites of the old temple-worship, in beauty, glory, and order — nor yet those of the heathen, in their sacred Eleusinian mysteries, [11] for number, solemnity, gravity, and appearance of devotion. Rejecting the true glory of gospel-worship, which the apostle expressly says consists in the "ministry of the Spirit,"[2Cor 3.8] they substituted *this* in its place. This debased the profession of Christian religion beneath that of the Jews and Pagans, especially considering that most of their ceremonies were borrowed or stolen from them. But I will never believe that their conversion of the holy prayers of the church, by an open contempt for the whole work of the Spirit of God in them, into a theatrical, pompous observance of ludicrous rites and ceremonies, can give so much as temporary satisfaction to any who are not given up to strong delusions to believe a lie. The exercise of ingrafted prevalent superstition will appease a natural conscience; outward forms and representations of things believed will please the fancy and exercise the imagination; variety and frequent changes of modes, gestures, and postures, with a sort of prayer always beginning and always ending them, will entertain present thoughts and outward senses — so that finding themselves greatly affected by these means, men may suppose that they pray very well, when they do nothing

less well. Prayer consists in a holy exercise of faith, love, trust, and delight in God, acting in a representation of our wills and desires to Him, through the aid and assistance of the Holy Ghost; yet it may be absent, even where all these are most effectively present. This [devised formality] also produced all the pretended ornaments of their temples, chapels, and oratories, by crucifixes, images, multiple altars, with relics, tapers, vestments, and other utensils.

None of these things, by which Christian religion is corrupted and debased, would ever have come into the minds of men, if a necessity for their invention had not been introduced by establishing set forms of prayer, as the only way and means of divine worship. Wherever these are retained, proportionate to the principles of the doctrine which men profess, some such *ceremonies* must also be retained. I will not deny, therefore, that here lies the foundation of all our present differences about the manner of divine worship. Suppose a necessity for confining the solemn worship of the church to set forms of prayer, and I will grant that various rituals and ceremonies may be well judged as necessary to accompany their observance — for without them, they will quickly grow obsolete and unsatisfactory. If, on the other hand, *free prayer* is allowed in the church, it is evident that nothing but the grace and gifts of the Holy Ghost (with a due regard for the decency of natural circumstances) is required in divine service, or can be admitted in it.

Nor is this consequent pleaded to prove that these ceremonies are unlawful either in themselves or in their use, however inseparable it seems from the sole public use of set forms of prayer in sacred administrations. The design of this consideration is only to show that in so far as they have been abused, and are subject to being abused, and always stand in need of

being abused (that they may attain the ends aimed at), the plea for the necessity of their imposition is that much weakened.

There is also another evil that has attended their invention. The guides of the church, after a while, were not content to make use of humanly-devised forms of prayer, confining themselves to their use alone in all public administrations. But they judged it fit, moreover, to impose the same practice on all whom they considered to be under their power.

At length they thought this was lawful — indeed, that it was necessary to do, upon ecclesiastical and civil penalties, and in the end, capital penalties. It is uncertain *when* this injunction was first prevalently entertained. For the first two or three centuries, there were no systems of composed forms of prayer used in any church whatever, as was proved. Afterward, when they began to be generally received on those grounds and for those reasons which I will not emphasize here (but I may do so afterward),[12] the authority of some great persons recommended the use of their compositions to other churches, even those which had a mind to use them as they saw good. But as for this device of *imposing* them, confining churches not only to the necessary use of them in general, but to a certain composition and collection of them, we are beholden for all the advantage received by this, to the popes of Rome alone, among the churches of the second edition. For it began from their own good inclination, and by their own authority, without the *advice of councils* or pretense of *traditions* — the two Gorgons' heads by which they frighten poor mortals in other cases, and turn them into stones. Then, by various degrees, they obtained a right to *impose* them, and did that accordingly. For when their use and benefit had been pleaded for a while, and progressed from there to their necessity, it was judged needful that they be imposed on all churches and Christians by their ecclesiastical

authority. But when afterward they had insinuated into them, and lodged in their heart, the two great idols of *transubstantiation* and the *unbloody sacrifice*, not only personal and pecuniary mulcts,[13] but capital punishments, were enacted and executed to enforce their observance. This brought fire and fagot[14] into Christian religion, making havoc of the true church of Christ, and shedding the blood of thousands. For the martyrdom of all who have suffered death in the world for their testimony against the idolatries of the mass, derives originally from *this* spring alone: of the necessary imposition of complete liturgical forms of prayer. For this is the sole foundation of the Roman Breviary and Missal, which have been the Abaddons[15] of the church of Christ in these parts of the world, and are ready to be so again. Take away this foundation, and they all fall to the ground. It is worth considering what kind of principle it is, which was naturally improved to such pernicious effects, and quickly found to be a fit and effectual engine in the hand of Satan to destroy and murder the servants of Christ.

If the churches of Christ had been left to their primitive liberty under the enjoined duties of reading and expounding the Scripture, of singing psalms to the praise of God, of administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and of diligently preaching the word — all of them with prayer, according to the abilities and spiritual gifts of those who presided in them (as it is evident they were for some ages) — it is impossible for any man to imagine what evils would have ensued from that, which might be of any consideration, in comparison to those enormous mischiefs which followed on the contrary practice. And as to all the inconveniences which, it is pretended, might ensue from this liberty, there is sufficient evangelical

provision for their prevention or cure made in the gospel constitution, and in the communion of all the true churches of Christ.

But this was not the whole of the evil that attended this imposition. For by this means, *all spiritual, ministerial gifts were caused to cease in the church*. For as these are talents given to trade with, [16] or manifestations of the Spirit given to profit or edify the church, they will not reside in any subject, they will not *abide* in any who receive them, if they are not *improved* by continual exercise. We see every day what effects the contempt or neglect of them produces.

Therefore, their exercise being restrained and excluded by this imposition, they were utterly lost in the church. So that it was looked at as a rare thing for anyone to be able to pray in the administration of divine worship. Indeed, the pretense of such an ability was considered a crime, and its exercise was considered a sin scarcely to be pardoned. Yet I do not find in any of the ancient canons, that it was reckoned among the faults for which a bishop or a presbyter was to be deposed. But it is openly evident, in those who were called to officiate in public assemblies, as to the gifts which they had received for edifying the church in divine administrations, that on this imposition arose that neglect which has given a fatal wound to the light and holiness of the church. For when most men of that order had provision of prayers made for them, which they purchased at an easy rate, or had them provided for them at the charge of the people, they were content to be at rest, freed from that labor and travail of mind which are required for the constant exercise and improvement of spiritual gifts. This imposition was the grave in which they were buried. For at length, as manifested in what happened, our Lord Jesus Christ being provoked by their sloth and unbelief, withheld the communication of such gifts from most of those who officiated

in divine worship. And hereby also, they lost one great evidence of the continuance of his mediatory life in heaven for the preservation of the church.

It is known that this was and is the state of things in the Roman church with reference to their whole worship in their public assemblies. And therefore, although they have indulged diverse enthusiasts, whose revelations and actings (pretended to be from the Holy Spirit) have tended to confirm their superstitions — and some of them have ventured at notions about mental prayer, [17] which they do not understand themselves — yet as to *free prayer* by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, in the church assemblies or otherwise, they were the first, and continue to be the fiercest opposers of it. And it is their interest to be so. For shake this foundation of imposing an entire system of humanly-clerked prayers as the only way and means of the worship of the church, and the whole fabric of the mass, with all the weight of their religion which is laid on it (if vanity and imagination may be said to have any weight), will tumble into the pit from which it came. And therefore, here I must acquaint the reader, that the first occasion of writing this discourse was the perusal of Mr. Cressy's preface to his *Church History.* [18] Out of a design to advance the pretended mental prayer of some of his enthusiasts, he reflects with much contumely [19] and reproach upon that *free praying* by the aids of the Spirit of God, which we plead for. He will find that all his pretenses are examined in the latter part of this discourse.

But notwithstanding these things, those of the Roman church at this day, boast of their devotions in their prayers, private and public, and thereby have prevailed on many who are disposed to complying with them, by their own guilt, ignorance, and superstition. The vanity of their pretense has been

well detected, by evincing the idolatry by which all or the most of their devotions are vitiated and rendered unacceptable. But this also carries weight with me: that the provision of the system and order of their whole devotion, and its exercise, are apparently composed and fitted to the exclusion of the whole work of the Spirit of God in prayer. And yet they continue under such an incredible delusion as to oppose, revile, and condemn the prayers of others who are not of their communion, on this consideration: that those who make them, do not have the Holy Spirit or his aids, which are all confined to their church! But if any society of men in the world, maintaining the outward profession of Christian religion, can do more than *their* church has done to exclude the Holy Ghost and all his operations in prayer and divine worship, I will acknowledge that I am greatly mistaken.

It is nothing but *ignorance* of the Spirit and of his whole work, with all the ends for which he is promised to the church (not a hatred and detestation of them) that causes any to embrace their ways of devotion.

But to return. The things pleaded for, may be reduced to the ensuing heads:

1. No persons, no churches, are obliged by virtue of any divine constitution, precept, or approved example, to confine themselves to *set or humanly-devised forms of prayer* in their public or private worship. If any such constitution, precept, or example can be produced (which up to now has not been done) it ought to be complied with. And while others are left to their liberty in their use, this is sufficient to enervate [20] all pleas for their imposition.

2. There is a promise in the Scripture, there are *many* promises, made and belonging to the church till the end of the world, of the communication of

the Holy Spirit to it, as to particular aids and assistance in prayer.[Eph 6.18] To deny this, is to overthrow the foundation of the holiness and comfort of all believers, and to bring present ruin to the souls of men in distress.

3. It is the duty of believers to look after, *to pray for*, those promised aids and assistances in prayer. Without this, all those promises are despised, and looked at as a flourish of words, without truth, power, or efficacy in them. But —

4. Believers are commanded to do this, and have *blessed experience* of success in this. The former is plain in the Scripture, [21] and the latter must be left to their own testimony, living and dying.

5. Beyond the divine institution contained in the Scripture, of all the ordinances of worship in the church, with the determination of the matter and form which are essential to them, and a due attendance to natural light in outward circumstances, there is nothing further needful for the due and orderly celebration of all public worship in its assembly. If any such thing is pretended, it is what Christ never appointed, nor the apostles ever practiced, nor the first churches after them, nor does it have any promise of acceptance.

6. For the preservation of *the unity of faith*, and the communion of churches among themselves in this, they may express an agreement, as there is in doctrine by a joint confession of faith, so in a declaration of the material and substantial parts of worship, with the order and method of worship. On this foundation, they may communicate [22] in all things with each other as churches, and in the practice of their members.

7. Because the differences about prayer under consideration concern Christian practice in the vitals of religion, great respect is to be had to the experience of those who believe, where it is not obstructed and clouded by

prejudices, sloth, or adverse principles and opinions. Therefore, the substance of the greatest part of the ensuing discourse, consists principally in the declaration of those concerns about prayer which relate to practice and experience. And hence it follows —

8. The best expedient to compose these differences among us, is for each one to *stir up the gift and grace of God* that is in him, and all of us give ourselves to that diligence, frequency, fervency, and perseverance in prayer which God requires of us; especially in such a season as that in which we live. It is a time in which those (whoever they may be) who trouble others, may for all they know, be near to trouble themselves. This will be the most effectual means to lead us all to the acknowledgement of the truth, without which, an agreement in notions is of little use or value.

But, I confess, hopes are weak concerning the due application of this remedy to any of our evils or distempers. The opinions of those who deny all internal, real, efficacious operations of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, and deride all their effects, have so far diffused and riveted themselves into the minds of many, that little is to be expected from a retreat to those aids and reliefs. This evil in the profession of religion was reserved for these latter ages. For although the work and grace of the Holy Spirit in divine worship was much neglected and lost in the world, no instances can be given in ages past of such contempt cast upon all His internal grace and operations, as now abounds in the world. If the Pelagians, who were most guilty, fell into any such excesses, they have escaped the records and monuments that remain of their deportment. They are bold efforts of atheistic inclinations in men, who openly avow their own ignorance and utter lack of all experience in spiritual and heavenly things. Nor is the person of Christ or his office better entertained among many; these have

been treated with scurrility [23] and blasphemy by some. In the meantime, the contests with churches about communion are great and fierce. But where these things are received and approved, those who do not live on a traditional faith, will not forsake Christ and the gospel, or renounce faith and experience, for the communion of any church in the world.

But almost all flesh has corrupted its way. The power of religion and the experience of it in the souls of men being generally lost, its profession is of no great use, nor will it long abide. Indeed, multitudes all over the world seem to be weary of the religion which they profess, so far as it is pleaded to be of divine revelation (whether true or false), unless they gain great secular advantages by professing it. There is no greater pretense of a flourishing state in religion, than that of some churches of the Roman communion, especially one at this day. But if the account concerning it is true, which is given to us from among themselves, then it is not much to be gloried in. For set aside the multitude of atheists, scripturists, and avowed disbelievers of the supernatural mysteries of the gospel, and the herd that remains is not very considerable. Indeed, their present height seems to be on a precipice. They are influenced into a hatred and persecution of the truth, by a combination of men upholding themselves and their way by extravagant secular interests and advantages. It is known to all who consider these things, what inroads are being made every day in other places — with their bold opinions concerning the authority of Scripture and the demonstration of it, the person and office of Christ, the Holy Spirit and all his operations, with their advancement of a pretense of morality in opposition to evangelical grace in its nature and efficacy. The effects of this poison are revealed daily, in decays of piety, in the increase of immoralities of all sorts, and in the abounding of atrocious sins, thus exposing nations to

the high displeasure of God. Yet the security of most in this state of things, proclaims itself in the various fruits of it. And it can never be sufficiently deplored.

One means of the preservation of the church, and its deliverance out of these evils, is a due attendance to the discharge of this duty of prayer, the declaration of its nature, with a vindication of the springs and causes from which it derives its efficacy. These are therefore attempted in the ensuing discourse. I hope, through the blessing of God, that it may be of some use to those whose minds are sincere in their inquiries after truth.

1. *Traduction*: something that is passed on or transmitted, generally to another generation; a "hand me down."
2. *Breviary*: A Catholic book of prayers to be recited daily by certain priests and members of religious orders. *Missal*: a book containing all the prayers and responses needed to celebrate Mass throughout the year. In 1549, Thomas Cranmer had written a similar collection of formal prayers and readings for Protestants, called the *Book of Common Prayer* (in Latin). Its contents were revised according to the sway of the times, whether Protestant or Catholic. Those who argued for keeping the purity of reformation doctrine in it, were called *Puritans*. The Book was redone in 1662 under the Act of Uniformity. It imposed Catholic doctrines and practices on the Church of England. Two thousand Puritan pastors who refused to use it, were ejected from their pulpits (*The Great Ejection*). This was a relatively recent event for Owen, and it may color some of his observations here. – WHG
3. *Own*: to admit or acknowledge. **Heb 11:6** But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
4. That is, the head of the household; by analogy, it may also apply to business owners in caring for their employees. – WHG
5. *Inveigle*: to influence or urge by subtle persuasion.
6. Jewish scholars identifed two Messiahs: the suffering Messiah - Messiah *ben Joseph* – and the victorious Messiah – Messiah *ben David*. The military figure that rises up with the gentile nations to kill Messiah ben Joseph is called *Armilus* (also *Armaglus* or *Armalgus*). He is eventually vanquished

by Messiah ben David. http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10729-messiah

7. Constantine called the Council of Nicea in 325 to establish church orthodoxy, in part. And he moved the seat of the Roman Empire to Constantinople in 330. The following is an online ***Catholic*** explanation of the development of the Mass, that you may compare with Owen's: "Until the fourth century, no liturgical books were used during Mass except for the Bible from which the lessons were read. The Mass contained two distinct parts. The first was a Christianized synagogue service of prayers, readings, and a sermon. At the end of this "Liturgy of the Word," the catechumens, those who were not baptized, had to leave; hence the name "Mass of the Catechumens." Then followed the second part, the *Christian Mystery*, the Eucharist. This was an *extempore* celebration by the bishop; but from apostolic times it had already acquired fixed forms. When St. Paul recounts the Words of Institution [1Cor 11.24-25], he is citing an already established Eucharistic formula. The faithful participated in the Eucharist with appropriate hymns and responses, something they could not have done without fixed forms. A new bishop would be expected to pray with the same prayers used by his predecessor, because that was the way things were done. The constant movement of Christians among the different Churches ensured a fairly uniform general pattern. This pattern still forms the basis of all the ancient rites. This is made clear in a description of the liturgy in the celebrated *Apologia* (explanation or justification) of St. Justin Martyr (d. about 164). All the elements of the traditional Roman Mass can easily be discerned in his account. **Once the practice of writing down the liturgy had become established in the fourth century**, the more or less uniform pattern previously used, crystallized into four parent rites from which all

others are derived. Three of the four parent rites derive from the three ancient patriarchates of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, which were recognized by the Council of Nicea (325)." http://www.catholicapologetics.info/modernproblems/newmass/develop.htm

8. *Adventitious*: associated by chance and not an integral part.

9. *Rubric*: directions for the conduct of church services.

10. *Cautels*: cautions respecting the mass.

11. *Eleusis*: Grecian city 11 NW of Athens. From as early as 600 BC up to the 4th century AD, Eleusis was the site of the Eleusinian Mysteries, or the Mysteries of Demeter and Kore. These Mysteries revolved around a belief that there was a hope for life after death for those who were initiated. – WHG

12. See this volume of the author's works, . — Ed. (Book IX).

13. *Mulct*: imposition of a penalty.

14. *Fagot*: a bundle of kindling; this refers to burning at the stake.

15. *Abaddon*: hell; the bottomless pit; also the destroyer or angel of that pit.

16. **Mat 25:15-16** "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; ... [16] "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.

17. *Mental prayer*: See . Prayer is merged into spiritual contemplation, without any succession and utterance of thought. Today, it is found in practices such as *lectio divina*, or centering prayer. The mind is "opened" to whatever thoughts may arise after reading a passage of Scripture, praying according to those thoughts, and then acting on them. – WHG

18. Hugh Paulin de Cressey (ca. 1605-1674) was a noted controversialist in defense of Popery; and among other productions devoted to this object, he wrote two treatises in reply to Stillingfleet. The work to which Owen alludes is entitled "*Church History of Britain; or, England from the Beginning of Christianity to the Norman Conquest*," and was published in it. — Ed.

19. *Contumely*: a rude expression intended to offend or hurt.

20. *Enervate*: weaken.

21. **Luk 21:36** "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." **1Thes 5:17** pray without ceasing;

22. *Communicate*: have communion with each other.

23. *Scurrility*: foul-mouthed or obscene abuse.

Chapter I. The use of prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit in it.

The works of the Spirit of God towards believers are either general, and not confined with respect to any one duty more than another, or they are particular, with respect to some special duty. Of the first sort are *regeneration* and *sanctification*, which being common to all duties, are the general principles of all actings of grace or our particular duties in them. But there are, moreover, various *special* works or operations of this Holy Spirit in and towards the disciples of Christ, which, although they may be reduced to the general head of *sanctification*, they fall under a special consideration that is proper to themselves. Of this sort is the *aid or assistance which he gives to us in our prayers and supplications*.

I suppose it will be granted that prayer, in the whole compass and extent of it — as comprising meditation, supplication, praise, and thanksgiving — is one of the most signal duties of religion. The light of nature in its most pregnant notions, with its practical language in the consciences of mankind, concurs in its suffrage [1] with the Scripture in this matter. For they jointly witness that it is not only an important duty in religion, but without it, there

neither is nor can be the exercise of any religion in the world. No persons ever lived in the acknowledgment of a Deity, except under the conduct of the same apprehension: they thought the duty of vows, prayers, and praises were incumbent on them as they found occasion. Indeed, even though they discovered external, ceremonious ways of solemnizing their devotions, it was this duty of prayer alone which was their natural, necessary, and fundamental acknowledgment of that Divine Being which they owned.

Nor are there any considerable stories extant, recording the monuments of the ancient heathen nations of the world, in which (it may be said to the shame of degenerate Christianity) there are no more frequent accounts given of their sacred invocations and supplications to their supposed gods, than are to be found in any of the historical monuments and stories concerning the actions of Christian nations in these latter ages. This, therefore, is the most natural and most eminent way and means of our converse with God. Without this converse, we have no present advantage above the beasts that perish, except what will turn to our eternal disadvantage in that misery of which *they* are incapable. This is the way by which we exercise towards Him, all that grace which we receive from him, and render him an acceptable acknowledgment of that homage and revenue of glory which we are never able to exhibit in the kind and measure that are due. Of what use and advantage the due performance of this duty is to ourselves, no man is able to fully express, though every one can add something of his own experience. But we need not emphasize the commendation of prayer, for it will be said, "By whom was it ever discommended?"

I wish I saw reason to acquiesce in that reply. For not only the practice of most, but the declared opinions of many, evidence that neither the

excellence of this duty, nor its necessity, finds such acceptance and esteem in the minds of men as pretended. But because this is not my present design, I will not further insist on it. For my purpose is not to address the nature, necessity, properties, uses, effects, and advantages, of this gracious duty, as it is the vital breath of our spiritual life to God. And yet it might be further considered and improved, considering these:

- That its origin is in the law of nature, as the first and principal means of acknowledging a Divine Power;
- That its neglect is sufficient evidence of practical atheism (for he that does not pray, says in his heart, "There is no God");
- That the Scripture gives direction as to the rule, manner, and proper object of prayer;
- Its constant use and practice is necessary, both from special commands, and from our state in this world, along with the whole variety of inward and outward occasions that may befall us, or that we may be exercised with;
- All the arguments, motives, and encouragements to constancy, fervency, and perseverance in performing the duty, with known examples of its mighty efficacy and marvellous success;
- The certain advantages which the souls of believers receive by prayer, in spiritual aids and supplies of strength, with peace and consolation;
- Various other concerns of prayer, although largely addressed by many already.

But none of these is my present design. What alone I will inquire into, is the interest of the Holy Spirit of God in prayer, by his gracious operations.

It cannot be denied that the work and actings of the Spirit of grace in and towards believers with respect to the duty of prayer, are more frequently and expressly asserted in the Scripture, than his operations with respect to

any other particular grace or duty whatever. If this were called into question, the ensuing discourse, I hope, will sufficiently vindicate and confirm its truth. But hereby believers are instructed in the importance of the duty itself, and also in the use and necessity of the aid and assistance of the Spirit of God to rightly discharge or perform it. For where frequent plain revelations concur, in multiplied commands and directions, with continual experience — as it is with believers in this case — their instruction is firm, as a way of being fixed on their minds. This renders an inquiry into this both necessary and timely. For what can be more so, than that in which the spiritual life and comfort of believers are so highly concerned, and which exhibits so gracious a condescension of divine love and goodness? Moreover, the opposition that is made in the world *against* the work of the Spirit of God in prayer, above all His other operations, requires that something be said in vindication of it.

But the enmity to this seems to be particular to these latter ages, I mean among those who pretend to any acquaintance with these things from the Scripture. It will be hard to find an instance in former ages of any to whom the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, was a reproach. But now the contradiction in this is great and fierce; and so there is no difference concerning any practical duty of religion in which parties at variance are more confident and satisfied in and about their own apprehensions, than those are who dissent about the work of the Spirit of God in our prayers and supplications. For those who oppose what is ascribed to Him in this by others, are not content to deny and reject it, and to refuse communion in the faith and practice of the work that is so ascribed to him. But such is the confidence they have in their conceptions, that they moreover revile and speak evil of what they oppose, contemptuously and

despitefully. Hence the ability to pray by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, as pleaded, is so far from being allowed to be a gift, or a grace, or a duty, or in any way useful among men, that it is derided and scorned as a paltry faculty, fit to be expelled from among Christians. At length, it is maligned as an invention and artifice of the Jesuits, to the surprise and offense of many sober persons. The ensuing discourse will manifest the unadvisedness of this insinuation.

Again, others profess that of all the privileges they are made partakers of in this world — of all the aids, assistances, or gifts they receive from or by the Spirit of God — what He communicates and helps them with in their prayers and supplications, is the most excellent and inestimable. And whether living or dying, in all troubles, distresses, temptations, and persecutions. they have in prayer such assurance and satisfaction in their minds, that they are not in the least moved by all the scorn and contempt cast upon their profession and practice in the exercise of the gift which they have received. Rather, they judge that those who reproach this work of the Spirit, contract for themselves the guilt of great sin. Hence I know of no difference about religious things that is managed with greater animosities in the minds of men, and with worse consequents, than this one about the work of the Spirit of God in prayer. Indeed, this is the hinge on which all other differences about divine worship turn and depend. It may, therefore, be well worth our while —indeed, it is our *duty* — to sedately and diligently inquire into what the *Scripture* teaches us in this matter. We must acquiesce in that. And all experiences on one side or the other must be tried and regulated by the Scripture.

Therefore, I propose two things for myself in the ensuing discourse, concerning which I will plainly and briefly endeavor to satisfy indifferent

and unprejudiced readers. And these are,

First, to evince *that a special work of the Spirit of God, in the prayers or praises of believers, is promised and actually granted under the New Testament*;

Secondly, to declare *what the nature of that work consists in*, or the manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

If no impression in these things can be made on the minds of men, possessed with those mighty prejudices which reject their very proposal and all consideration of them with contempt, then it may yet be of use to those who sincerely desire to live to God — those who are not biased with an undue love or hatred of the parties of men, nor elated with high valuations of their own conceptions above those of others (whom they think they have reason to scorn, if not to hate) — those who prefer the performance of their duty to all other considerations, endeavoring to subdue their inclinations and affections to this duty. Nor do I desire more of any reader than that he will grant, in this, that he is conversant about things which will have an influence into his everlasting account.

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1. *Suffrage*: testimony.

Chapter II. Zec 12.10 explained and vindicated.

The special promise of the administration of the Spirit of God to the end under consideration, is what I will lay as the foundation of the ensuing discourse.

Zec 12.10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications."

The Spirit promised here is the Spirit of God, "the Holy Spirit," with respect to the special end for which he is promised. And the manner of his administration, in the accomplishment of the promise, is expressed by, "I will pour out." The same word is used for the same purpose in Eze 39.29, and Joel 2.28, as other words of the same importance are also, which we render "pouring out," such as Pro 1.23; Isa 32.15, 44.3, 52.15. [1]

1. Two things have been declared elsewhere concerning this expression, as applied to the communication of the Holy Ghost:

(1.) What is intended in this, is a plentiful dispensation of him to the end for which he is promised, with respect to a singular and eminent degree in his operations. The apostle expresses this word, or the accomplishment of

what is promised in it, by Tit 3.6, "he has richly" [2] or abundantly "poured out his Spirit." Therefore, what is intended is not a mere grant and communication of the Spirit, but a plentiful effusion of him; which must have some eminent effects as pledges and tokens of this. For it is absurd to speak of a "plentiful, abundant effusion," with degrees above what was granted before, and yet there be no certain ways or means by which it may be evidenced and demonstrated. The Spirit, therefore, is so promised in this verse as to produce some notable and specific effects of his communication.

(2.) This promise is specific to the days of the gospel; I mean that every promise is specific where mention is made of pouring out the Spirit on men. This may be evinced by the consideration of every place where this expression is used. But in this place, it is most unquestionable that its immediate effect is looking to Christ as he was pierced. [3] And it may yet be further observed that there is a tacit comparison in it with some other time or season, or some other act of God, in which or by which he gave his Spirit before. But it was not in that way, manner, or measure that he now promises to bestow him. [4]

2. Those to whom he is thus promised are "the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," — that is, the whole church, expressed as a distribution into the ruling family, and the body of the people under their rule.

The family of David, then in supreme power among the people in the person of Zerubbabel, is expressly mentioned for three reasons:

(1.) Because the faithfulness of God in his promises was concerned in the preservation of that family from which the Messiah was to spring — Christ himself, in the rule of the church, was thereby being typed out in a special manner.

(2.) Because all the promises in a unique manner were first to be fulfilled in the person of Christ, typed by David and his house. The Spirit, under the New Testament, was first to be poured out on Christ in all fullness; [5] and then communicated from Him to others.

(3.) It may be to denote the special gifts and graces that would be communicated to those who were to be employed in the rule and conduct of the church under Him, the king and head of the church. And "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" is a phrase that expresses the whole church, because that was the seat of all their public ordinances of worship. See Psa 122.

Therefore, the whole spiritual church of God, all believers, are the object of this promise, as represented in the "house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

3. There are two special qualifications of the promised Spirit; for —

(1.) He is to be a "Spirit of grace," Heb. *chen* [OT:02580] which the Greek constantly renders *charis*, and we render "grace," from the Latin *gratia*. It is derived from *chanan* [OT:02603], as is the following word *tachanuwn* [OT:08469 *supplication*], which signifies to "have mercy," or "compassion," to be "gracious." All the words by which God's gracious dealings with sinners are expressed in Hebrew, include the meaning of pity, compassion, free goodness, and bounty. And it is variously used in the Scripture. Sometimes it is used for the grace and favor of God, because it is the fountain of all gracious and merciful effects towards us, Rom 1.7, 4.16, 5.2, 15, 20, 6.1, 11.5; 1Cor 1.3; and in countless other places. And sometimes it is used for the principal *effect* of this, or the gracious favor of God by which he accepts us in Christ, Eph 2.5; 2Thes 1.12. This is the grace the apostle prays for in behalf of the church, Rom 16.20; 1Cor 16.23.

And sometimes it is applied to the favor of men, and acceptance with them, called "finding grace" or "favor" in the sight of anyone, Gen 39.4, 21; 1Sam 2.26; Pro 3.4; Est 2.15, 17, 5.2; Luk 2.52; Acts 4.33. And sometimes for the free effectual efficacy of grace in those in whom it is found, Acts 14.26; 1Cor 15.10; 2Cor 12.9. And sometimes for our justification and salvation by the free grace or favor of God in Christ, Joh 1.17; 1Pet 1.13; — for the gospel itself, as the instrument of the declaration and communication of the grace of God, 2Cor 6.1; Eph 3.2; Col 1.6; Tit 2.11; — for the free donation of the grace and gifts of the Spirit, Joh 1.16; Eph 4.7. And it has many other meanings which do not belong to our purpose.

Three things may be intended in this adjunct of *grace*.

[1.] A respect to the *sovereign cause* of his dispensation, which is none other than the *mere grace* of God. He may be called a "Spirit of grace," because his donation is an effect of grace, without the least respect to any desert [6] in those to whom he is given. This reason for the appellation is declared in Tit 3.4-7. [7] The sole cause and reason for pouring out the Spirit upon us, in opposition to our own works or deservings, is the love and kindness of God in Jesus Christ. This is why He may be justly called a "Spirit of grace."

[2.] As he is the *author* of all grace in and to those on whom he is *poured out*. So God is called the "God of all grace," because he is the fountain and author of it. And it has been proved elsewhere that the Holy Spirit is the immediate efficient cause of all grace in us, both in general and in the principal instances of regeneration and sanctification; and it will yet be further confirmed in what ensues.

[3.] The Hebrew *chen* is commonly used for that *grace* or *favor* which one has with another: "Let me find *grace* in your sight;" as in the instances

quoted before. And so the Spirit may also be called a "Spirit of grace" because those on whom he is poured out have grace and favor with God; they are gracious with him, as being "accepted in the Beloved," Eph 1.6.

Because, therefore, all these concur wherever this Spirit is communicated, I know of no reason why we may not judge them all to be included here, though the second one is especially intended. The Spirit is promised to work grace and holiness in all on whom he is bestowed.

(2.) He is, as thus poured out, a "Spirit of supplications;" that is, of *prayer for grace and mercy*. The word is formed from *chen*, as the other was — to be gracious or merciful. And expressing our act towards God, it is prayer for grace — a supplication; and it is never used except to express vocal prayer, either in the assemblies of the people of God or by private persons. "Hearken to the voice of my supplications," is rendered by the apostle Paul *hiketeria* [NT:2428], Heb 5.7; it is used in this place alone in the Scripture. Originally it signified a bough or olive-branch wrapped with wool or bays, or something of like nature, which were carried in the hands and lifted up by those who were suppliants to others for obtaining peace, or averting their displeasure. Hence came the phrase *velamenta proeferre*, to hold out such covered branches. So Livy uses it, *De Bel. Punic., lib. 24 cap. 30*, "Holding forth olive-branches, and other covered tokens used by suppliants, they prayed that they might be received" into grace and favor. [8]

They called them "branches of supplication," or prayer. And they constantly called those prayers which they made solemnly to their gods, *supplications*.

Some render *tachanuwn* as *miserationes* or *lamentationes*, and interpret it as men bemoaning themselves in their prayers for grace and mercy — in the end, this does not vary from the sense insisted on. But because it is derived

from *chen*, which signifies to be merciful or gracious, and it expresses an act of ours towards God, it can properly signify nothing but supplications for mercy and grace; nor is it used otherwise in the Scripture. See Job 41.3; Pro 18.23; Dan 9.3; Jer 31.9; 2Chr 6.21; Jer 3.21; Psa 28.2, 6; 31.22; 116.1; 130.2; 140.6; 143.1; Dan 9.18, 23; Psa 86.6. These are all the places, besides this one, where the word is used. In all of them, it denotes deprecation of evil and supplication for grace, constantly in the plural number, to denote the earnestness of men.

Therefore, these are properly supplications for grace and mercy, for freedom and deliverance from evil. By a synecdoche, [9] it refers to all sorts of prayer whatever. We may therefore inquire in what sense the Holy Spirit of God is called a "Spirit of supplications," or what the reason is for attributing this to him. And he must be such, either formally or efficiently — either because he is such a spirit in himself, or he is such a spirit to us. If it is in the former way, then he is a Spirit who himself prays; and according to the import of those Hebraisms, he abounds in that duty. A "man of wickedness," Isa 55.7, or a "man of blood," is a man wholly given to wickedness and violence. So, on the other hand, a "Spirit of supplications" would be a Spirit abounding in prayer for mercy and diverting evil, as the word imports. Now, the Holy Ghost cannot be a Spirit of supplication in this way, either for himself or for us. No imagination of any such thing can be admitted with respect to him, without the highest blasphemy. Nor can he make supplications for us in his own person; for any such interposition in heaven on our behalf is wholly confined in the Scripture to the priestly office of Christ and his intercession. All prayer, whether oral or interpretative only, is the act of a nature that is inferior to that which is prayed to. The Spirit of God has no nature inferior to that which is divine.

Therefore, unless we deny His deity, we cannot suppose he is *formally* a Spirit of supplication. He is such, therefore, *efficiently* with respect to us; and he is promised to us as such. Therefore, in general, our inquiry is how or in what sense he is a Spirit of supplication.

And there are but two ways conceivable by which this may be affirmed about him:

[1.] By working *gracious inclinations* and dispositions in us to this duty;

[2.] By giving us a gracious *ability* for discharging it in a due manner.

These, therefore, must belong to and comprise his efficiency as a Spirit of supplication.

Both of them are included in that statement of the apostle, "The Spirit itself makes intercession for us," Rom 8.26. Those who can put any other sense on this promise, would do well to express it. Every sense consistent with the analogy of faith will be admitted, so that we do not judge that the words are void of sense and have nothing in them. To deny that the Spirit of God is a Spirit of supplication, in and to believers, is to reject the testimony of God himself.

By the ways mentioned, we affirm that he is such a Spirit, nor can any other way be assigned.

[1.] He is such by working *gracious inclinations* and dispositions in us to this duty. He is the one who prepares, disposes, and inclines the hearts of believers to exercise this duty with delight and spiritual contentment. And where this is not so, no prayer is acceptable to God. He does not delight in those cries which an unwilling mind is pressed or forced to by earthly desires, distress, or misery, Jas 4.3. [10] Of ourselves, naturally, we are averse to any converse and intercourse with God, because we are alienated from living to him, by the ignorance and vanity of our minds.

And there is a secret alienation still working in us from all duties of immediate communion with him. It is he alone who works us toward that frame in which we pray continually, as it is required of us. Our hearts are kept ready and prepared for this duty on all occasions and opportunities. And in the meantime, they are acted and steered under the conduct and influence of those graces which are to be exercised in them. Some call this the "grace of prayer" that is given to us by the Holy Ghost. I suppose they do so improperly, though I will not contend about it. For prayer, absolutely and formally, is not a particular grace distinct from all other graces that are exercised in it. Rather, it is the way and manner by which we are to exercise all other graces of faith, love, delight, fear, reverence, self-abasement and the like, to certain special ends. I know of no grace of prayer that is distinct or different from the exercise of these graces. It is therefore a holy commanded way to exercise other graces, but it is not a particular grace itself. Only, where any person is singularly disposed and devoted to this duty, we may, if we please (though improperly), say he is eminent in the grace of prayer. And I suppose that it will not be denied by anyone, that this part of His work is intended in the promise.

If any are minded to distance themselves from other things which are ascribed to him — or if they abhor allowing him part or interest in our supplications, such that we may in any sense be said to "pray in the Holy Ghost" — or if they will not allow so much as the work of his grace being wrought in believers by virtue of this promise — then they will manage to oppose his other actings at too dear a rate to be gainers by it.

[2.] He is such a Spirit by giving an *ability* for prayer, or communicating a gift to the minds of men, that enables them to profitably exercise all his graces in that special way of prayer, for themselves and others. It will be

granted afterward that there may be a gift of prayer used where there is no grace in its exercise, nor perhaps is there any to be exercised — that is, as some improperly express it, "the *gift* of prayer, where the *grace* of prayer is absent." But in declaring how the Spirit is a Spirit of supplication, we must take both into consideration. He both *disposes* us to pray — that is, to exercise grace in that special way — and he *enables* us to pray. Where this ability is wholly and absolutely lacking, or where it is rejected or despised — even though he may act and exercise those very graces which are to be exercised in prayer, and whose exercise in that way is commonly called the "grace of prayer" — this work of his belongs to the general head of sanctification, in which he preserves, excites, and acts all our graces, and not to this special work of prayer; nor is he a Spirit of supplication in it

Therefore, He is only a Spirit of supplication, *properly*, as he communicates a gift or ability to anyone, to exercise all His graces in the way and duty of prayer. This is what he is promised for here, and what he is promised to be poured out for, that is, in an abundant and plentiful manner. Wherever he is bestowed in the accomplishment of this promise, he both *disposes* the hearts of men to pray, and he *enables* them to do so. Indeed, he communicates this ability to others in great variety as to its degrees, and its usefulness in its exercise. But he does it for everyone so far as necessary for his own spiritual concerns, or for the discharge of his duty towards God and all others. But though this assertion contains the substance of what we plead for, further confirmation of it must be the principal subject of the ensuing discourse.

It needs no other demonstration that this is the sense of Zec 12.10, and that it is the mind of the Holy Ghost in the words. It expresses their proper meaning, nor can any other sense be tolerably affixed to them. To deny that

the Holy Spirit is designated a *Spirit of supplication* because he inclines, disposes, and enables to pray, those to whom he is promised, and on whom he is bestowed as such, is to use a little too much liberty in sacred things.

A learned man of late, out of hatred for the Spirit of prayer, or for prayer being His gift, has endeavored to deprive the church of God of the whole benefit and comfort of this promise.[11] For he contends that it does not belong to the Christian church, but to the Jews only. If he had said it belonged to the Jews in the first place, who would be converted to Christ, he would not have gone so wide from the truth, nor from the sense of other expositors, even though he said more than he could prove. But it is foolish and impious to suppose that any grace, any mercy, any privilege by Jesus Christ, is promised to the Jews, in which Gentile believers will not be sharers, or that whoever has the prerogative as to *degrees*, would not partake of the same *kind*. For if they too are children of Abraham, if the blessing of faithful Abraham comes upon them also. If it is through them that he is the heir of the world, his spiritual seed inhabiting it by right in all places, then all the promises made to him and his seed, belong to them. And because most of the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Old Testament are made to Jacob and Israel, to Jerusalem and Zion, it is saying that all the promises are confined to the Jews. And so at once, this despoils the church of God of all right and title to them. This impious folly and sacrilege has been attempted by some.

But because all the promises belong to the same covenant, with all the grace contained in them and exhibited by them, whoever has an interest in that covenant by faith, has an interest in all the promises of God that belong to it. And that person has an equal right to them with those to whom they were first given. To suppose, now that the Jews are rejected for their

unbelief, that the promises of God made to them while they stood by faith, have ceased and are of no use, is to overthrow the covenant of Abraham. Indeed, it overthrows the whole truth of the New Testament. But the apostle assures us that "all the promises of God in Christ are yes, and Amen in him, to the glory of God *by us*;" 2Cor 1.20 — that is, in their accomplishment *in us* and *towards us*. He also positively affirms that all believers have received those promises which were originally made to Israel, 2Cor 6.16-18, 7.1. [12] And not only so, but he declares that the promises which were made of old to particular persons on special occasions — as to the grace, power, and love contained in them and intended by them — still belong to all individual believers, and they are applicable by them to all their special occasions, Heb 13.5-6. [13] And their right to or interest in all the promises of God, is what those who are concerned in the obedience of faith, would not forego for all that this world can supply them with.

This, therefore, is only a particular instance of the work and effect of the Spirit, as he is generally promised in the covenant. As we declared, the promises of him as a Spirit of grace and holiness in the covenant, belong to the believers of the Gentiles also. If they do not, then they have neither share nor interest in Christ; which is a better plea for the Jew than this particular instance will afford. But this promise is only a special declaration of what, in one case, this Spirit will do, who is promised as a Spirit of grace and holiness in the covenant. And therefore the author [14] of the evasion, suspecting that the fraud and sacrilege of it would be detected, resorts to other subterfuges, which we will afterward address, so far as we are concerned.

It may be more soberly objected that,

"The Spirit of grace and supplication was given to believers under the Old Testament. And therefore, if there is no more in it, if some extraordinary gift is not intended here, then how does it come to be made a special promise with respect to the times of the New Testament? It may therefore be supposed that what is intended here is not the ordinary grace or gift of prayer, which believers receive, and especially the officers of the church, but some extraordinary gift bestowed on the apostles and first converts to the church. This is how the prophecy concerning the effusion of the Spirit on all sorts of persons (Joel 2.28-32) is interpreted by Peter, and applied to sending the Holy Ghost in miraculous gifts on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2.15-21."

Ans. 1. I have already obviated this objection elsewhere, in general, by showing the prodigious folly of that imagination that the dispensation of the Spirit is confined to the first times of the gospel. This objection is a branch of that objection — enmity to the matter itself is the occasion of the whole objection.

Ans. 2. Nowhere do we find *grace* and *prayer*, the things promised here, reckoned among the *extraordinary gifts* of the Spirit under the New Testament. Prayer in an unknown tongue was extraordinary; but prayer itself was not, any more than grace; which if it was, the whole present church is graceless.

Ans. 3. The promise in Joel had express respect to the extraordinary gifts of *prophecy* and *visions*; and therefore it had its principal accomplishment on the day of Pentecost. This promise is of quite another nature.

Ans. 4. What is necessary for all believers, and their duty, and always so, is not an *extraordinary gift* bestowed on a few for a season. Now, if there are any who think that grace and prayer are not necessary for all believers,

or that they may have abilities and exercise them without any aid of the Holy Spirit, then I will not at present contend with them. For this is not a place to plead with those who deny the principles of the Christian faith. Divine commands are the rule of our duty, not man's imaginations.

Ans. 5. If this is not a special promise of the New Testament, because the matter of it, or the grace promised, was in some degree and measure enjoyed under the Old Testament, then there is no promise made with respect to that scion. [15] For the saints under the Old Testament were really made partakers of all the same graces with those under the New. Therefore,

Ans. 6. Two things are intended in the promise with respect to the times of the gospel:

(1.) *An application and enlargement* of this grace or favor, as to its subjects *extensively*. It was confined to a few under the Old Testament, but now it will be communicated to many, and diffused all over the world. It will be so poured out as to be "shed abroad," and imparted thereby to many. What before was only like watering a garden by a special hand, is now like the clouds pouring themselves out on the whole face of the earth.

(2.) An *increase of the degrees* of spiritual abilities for the performance of it, Tit 3.5-6. There is now a rich communication of the Spirit of grace and prayer granted to believers, in comparison to what was enjoyed under the Old Testament. The very nature of the dispensation of the gospel evinces and confirms this, in which we receive from Jesus Christ "grace for grace." I suppose it is needless to prove that, as to all spiritual supplies of grace, an *abundant* administration of it is brought in by Jesus Christ, the whole Scripture testifying to it.

There were, indeed, under the Old Testament, prayers to and praises of God dictated by a Spirit of prophecy, and received by immediate divine

revelation, containing mysteries for the instruction of the church in all ages. These prayers were not suggested to them by the aid of the Spirit as a Spirit of *supplication*, but they were dictated in and to them by the Spirit as a Spirit of *prophecy*. Nor did they themselves fully comprehend the mind of the Holy Spirit in them, but inquired diligently into this, as into other prophecies given out by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, 1Pet 1.10-12; [16] — an instance of which we may have in Psalm 22; it is a prayer with thanksgiving from first to last. Now David, to whom it was given by inspiration, might find in his own condition, things that had some low and mean [17] resemblance to what was intended in the words suggested to him by the Holy Spirit, as David was a type of Christ. Yet the depth of the mysteries contained in it, the principal scope and design of the Holy Ghost, was in great measure concealed from David, and much more from others. Only, it was given out to the church by immediate inspiration, so that believers might search and diligently inquire into what was signified and foretold in this — that they might thereby be gradually led into the knowledge of the mysteries of God, as he was pleased to graciously communicate his saving light to them.

But with this, it was revealed to David and the other prophets, so that in these things "they did not minister to themselves, but to us," 1Pet 1.12 as having mysteries in them which they could not, which they were not, to comprehend. But just as this gift has ceased under the New Testament (after finishing the canon of the Scripture), and no one pretends to it, so it was confined of old to a very few inspired persons. It does not belong to our present inquiry, for we speak only of those things which are common to all believers. And in this, a preference in all things must be given to those under the New Testament.

Therefore, if it could be proved (which I know it cannot be) that most of the church under the Old Testament made use of any *forms of prayers, as* mere forms of prayer — without any other end, use, or mystical instruction (all of which concurred in their prophetic composures), and for the sole end of prayer — it would not follow from this, whatever any pretend or plead, that believers under the New Testament may do the same; much less that they may be obliged to always do so. For there is now a more plentiful and rich effusion of the Spirit of grace and supplication upon them than was upon those of old. And as our duty is to be regulated by God's commands, so God's commands are suited to the dispensation of his grace. Persons under the New Testament are commanded to pray. For them not to constantly make use of the gifts, aids, and assistances of the Spirit, which are particularly dispensed and communicated in prayer, under a pretense of what was done under the Old, is to reject the grace of the gospel, and to make themselves guilty of the highest ingratitude. Therefore, we may and ought to bear with those who, not having received anything of this promised grace and assistance, nor believing there is any such thing, plead for the use of forms of prayer to be composed by some and read by others or themselves, and only in the discharge of this duty of prayer. Yet those who have been made partakers of this grace, and who own it as their duty to constantly use and improve the promised aids of the Spirit of God, will be careful not to allow any such principles or practice that would plainly annihilate the promise.

This much, then, we may suppose to have obtained in consideration of this testimony: *That God has promised under the New Testament to give to believers, in a plentiful manner or measure, the Spirit of grace and of*

supplications, or his own Holy Spirit, enabling them to pray according to his mind and will.

The way and manner of his work in this will be declared afterward. It may suffice to generally oppose this one promise, to the open reproaches and bold contempts that are cast on the Spirit of prayer by many. In the end, their framers will fail in their design, unless they can blot this text out of the Scripture.

We will not, therefore, need to plead any other testimony to the same purpose in the way of promises. Only, we may observe that this being expressly assigned as a part of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, as promised under the New Testament, there is no one promise to that purpose in which this grace is not included. Therefore, the known multiplicity of them adds strength to our argument.

1. **Pro 1:23** Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out [*naba* '] my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. **Isa 32:15** Until the Spirit is poured [*'arah*] upon us from on high, And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, And the fruitful field is counted as a forest. **Isa 44:3** For I will pour [*yatsaq*] water on him who is thirsty, And floods [*nazal*] on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring; **Isa 52:15** So shall He sprinkle [*nazah*] many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.
2. ἐξέχεεν πλουσίως *ekcheen plousios* (NT:1632,4146)
3. **Joh 19:34** But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.
4. Didymus gives us a brief account of the whole of these observations, *De Spir. Sanc. i. 1*: "Significat autem effusionis verbum, largam, et divitem muneris abundantiam; itaque cum unus quis alicubi, aut duo Spiritum Sanctum accipiunt, non dicitur, 'Effundam de Spiritu meo,' sed tunc, quando in universas gentes munus Spiritus Sancti redundaverit."
5. **Joh 3:34** For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God does not give the Spirit by measure *to him*. **Col 2:9** For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
6. That is, *deserving* or merit.
7. **Tit 3:4** But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, [5] not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom He poured out on us abundantly

through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

8. Virgil declares this custom in his *Æneas*, addressing himself to Evander: —“Optime Grajugenûm, cui me fortuna precariEt vittâ comptos voluit prætendere ramos.” Virg. *Æn. viii. 127*.

9. *Synecdoche*: substituting a more inclusive term for a less inclusive one, or vice versa. ("All hands on deck!")

10. **Jas 4:3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

11. Amyrald. Præfat. in Psal. Moses Amyraut (1596-1664), propounder of *Amyraldianism* (4-point Calvinism with universal atonement). The work referred to is his "Paraphrase on the New Testament and Psalms" (1645).

12. **2Cor 6:16** And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **you are the temple of the living God**. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." [17] Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." [18] "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." **2Cor 7:1** Therefore, **having these promises**, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

13. **Heb 13:5** *Let your* conduct *be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." [6] So we may boldly say: "The LORD *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

14. That is, Amyraut.

15. *Scion*: a shoot or sprout that is cut for grafting. **Rom 11:17** And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree…

16. **1Pet 1:12** To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things which angels desire to look into.

17. *Mean*: lowly or beggarly – impoverished or lacking social status, education, and "refinement."

Chapter III. Gal 4.6 explained and vindicated.

The next general evidence given for the truth under consideration is the account of the *accomplishment* of this promise under the New Testament, where the nature of the operation of the Holy Spirit in this is also expressed in general. And this is

Gal 4.6, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

As was said, an account is given here of the *accomplishment* of the promise explained before; and various things may be considered in the words:

First. The *subjects* on whom the Spirit is bestowed and in whom he works are *first*, believers, or those who by the Spirit of adoption are made the children of God. We receive the adoption of sons. And *because* we are sons, He sends his Spirit into our hearts. And we obtain this privilege of adoption, by faith in Christ Jesus: Joh 1.12, "As many as received him, to *them* he gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name." *Secondly*, there is a special appellation or description of the Spirit as

promised and given for this purpose: he is the "Spirit of the Son." It has been evinced elsewhere that the original ground and reason for this is his eternal relation to the Son, as proceeding from him. But something more particular is intended here. He is called the "Spirit of the Son" with respect to his communication to believers. Therefore, included in this is that special regard to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which is mentioned *in the work*, as it is an evangelical mercy and privilege. He is therefore called the "Spirit of the Son" not only because of his *eternal procession* from him, but —

1. Because the Spirit was in the first place *given to Christ* as the head of the church, for the unction, consecration, and sanctification of his human nature. Here the Spirit laid the foundation, and gave an example of what He was to do in and towards all his members.

2. It is immediately from and by the Son that the Spirit is *communicated* to us, in two ways:

(1.) *Authoritatively*, by virtue of the covenant between the Father and Son, on which — upon Christ's accomplishment of the work of mediation in a state of humiliation, and according to it — he "received the promise of the Holy Ghost;" that is, the power and authority to bestow Him on whom he would, for all the ends of that mediation, Acts 2.33, 5.32. [1]

(2.) *Formally*, in that all the graces of the Spirit are derived to us from Christ, as the head of the church, as the spring of all spiritual life, in whom they were all treasured and laid up for that purpose, Col 1.19, 2.19; Eph 4.16; Col 3.1-4. [2]

Secondly. The work of this Spirit in general, as bestowed on believers, is partly included and partly expressed in these words. In general (which is included), he enables them to behave themselves suitably to that state and condition into which they are taken upon their faith in Christ Jesus. They

are made children of God by adoption; and it is fitting that they be taught to carry themselves as becomes that new relation. "Because you are sons, he has given you the Spirit of his Son;" without which they cannot walk before him as becomes sons. He teaches them to bear and behave themselves no longer as foreigners and strangers, nor as servants only, but as "children" and "heirs of God," Rom 8.15, 17. He endows them with a frame and disposition of heart toward holiness, and filial obedience. For just as he takes away the distance, making those near who were aliens and far from God, so he removes that fear, dread, and bondage which those who are under the power of the law are kept in: 2Tim 1.7, "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." This is not "the spirit of fear," or a "spirit of bondage to fear," as in Rom 8.15 — that is, in and by the efficacy of the law filling our minds with dread, and those considerations of God that keep us at a distance from him. But in the sons on whom he is bestowed, he is a Spirit of *power*: strengthening and enabling them to all duties of obedience.

This Spirit of power [3] is that by which we are enabled to obedience, which the apostle gives thanks for in 1Tim 1.12, "To Christ that enables me;" that is, by his Spirit of power. For without the Spirit of adoption, we do not have the least strength or power to behave ourselves as sons in the family of God. And he is also, as thus bestowed, a Spirit of *love*, who works in us that love for God and that delight in him, which becomes children towards their heavenly Father. This is the first genuine consequent of this relation. There may be many duties performed to God where there is no true love to him, or at least no love to him as a Father in Christ, which alone is genuine and accepted. And, lastly, he is also a Spirit of a *modest*, grave, and sober mind. Even children are apt to grow wanton, and curious, and proud

in their Father's house. But the Spirit enables them to behave themselves with that sobriety, modesty, and humility, which becomes the family of God.

And in these three things, *spiritual power, love*, and *sobriety* of mind, consists the whole deportment of the children of God in his family. This is the state and condition of those who, by the effectual working of the Spirit of adoption, are delivered from the "spirit of bondage to fear," which the apostle discusses in Rom 8.15.

Those who are under the power of that Spirit, or that *efficacious working of the Spirit by the law*, cannot, by virtue of any aids or assistance, make their addresses to him by prayer in a due manner. For although the means by which they are brought into this state is the Spirit of God acting upon their souls and consciences by the law, yet formally, as they are in the state of nature, the spirit by which they are moved is the unclean "spirit of the world," or the influence of him who "rules in the children of disobedience." The law that they obey is the "law of the members" mentioned by the apostle in Rom 7.23. The works which they perform are the "unfruitful works of darkness;" [4] and the fruits of these unfruitful works are "sin" and "death." Being under this bondage, they have no power to approach God; and their bondage tending to fear, they can have no delight in access to him. Whatever other provisions or preparations such persons may have for this duty, they can never perform it to the glory of God, nor so as to find acceptance with him.

With those who are delivered from this state, all things are otherwise. The Spirit by which they are moved is the Spirit of God — the Spirit of adoption, of power, love, and a sound mind. The law which they are under obedience to is the holy law of God, as written in the fleshy tablets of their

hearts.[2Cor 3.3] Its effects are faith and love, with all other graces of the Spirit; from this they receive the fruits in peace, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.[1Pet 1.8]

Thirdly. An instance is given of his effectively working these things in the adopted sons of God in the *duty of prayer*, crying "Abba, Father." The object of the special duty intended is "God, even the Father," Eph 2.18. "Abba, *o Pater*." [5] *Abba* is the Syriac or Chaldee name for Father, then in common use among the Jews; and *Pater* was the same name among the Greeks or Gentiles — so that the common interest of Jews and Gentiles in this privilege may be intended, or rather, a holy boldness and intimate confidence of love is designed in the reduplication of the name. The Jews have a saying in the Babylonian Talmud, in the Treatise of Blessings — "Servants and handmaids" (that is, bond-servants) "do not call on such a one, *Abba* or *Ymma*." [6] Freedom of state, with a right to adoption, which they are incapable of, is required for this liberty and confidence

God gives his adopted sons *nadiyb ru'ach*, [7] "a free Spirit," Psa 51.12 — a Spirit of gracious, filial ingenuousness. [8] This is that Spirit which cries "Abba." That is the word by which those who were adopted first saluted their fathers, to testify to their affection and obedience. For "abba" signifies not only "father," but "my father;" for *'ab*, [9] "my father," in the Hebrew, is rendered by the Chaldee paraphrast [10] only, "abba." [11] See Gen 19.34, and elsewhere constantly. To this purpose, Chrysostom says: "Being willing to show the ingenuousness" (that is, in this duty), "he also uses the language of the Hebrews, and says not only 'Father,' but 'Abba, Father;' which is a word proper to those who are highly ingenuous." [12]

And the Spirit effects this in two ways:

1. By the excitation of graces and gracious affections in their souls in this duty, especially those of faith, love, and delight.

2. By enabling them to exercise those graces and express those affections in vocal prayer; for *chrazon* [13] denotes not only crying, but an earnestness of mind expressed in vocal prayer. It is praying "with a loud voice," [14] as it is said of our Savior in Mat 27.50; for the whole of our duty in our supplications is expressed in this.

Now, we are not concerned, nor do we at present inquire, what course those take, what means they employ, or what helps they use in prayer, who are not as yet partakers of this privilege of adoption. It is only those who are adopted, whom the Spirit of God assists in this duty. The only question is, what such persons are to do in compliance with his assistance, or what it is that they obtain by it.

And we may compare the different expressions used by the apostle in this matter, by which the general nature of the work of the Spirit in this will further appear. In this place he says, "God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father." In Rom 8.15. he says we have received "the Spirit of adoption," — the Spirit of the Son, given to us *because* we are sons — "by which," or in whom, "we cry, Abba, Father." His acting in us, and our acting by him, are expressed by the same word. And the inquiry here is how, in the same duty, he is said to "cry" in us, and we are said to "cry" in him. And there can be no reason for this except that the same work is both his and ours in diverse respects. As it is an act of *grace* and spiritual power, it is his, or it is worked in us by him alone. And as it is a duty performed by us, by virtue of his assistance, it is ours — by him *we cry*, "Abba, Father." To deny his actings in our duties is to overthrow the gospel.

And it is prayer formally considered, as comprising the gift of prayer with its outward exercise, which is intended. The mere excitation of the graces of faith, love, trust, delight, desire, self-abasement, and similar animating principles of prayer, cannot be expressed by *crying*, though it is included in it. Their actual exercise in prayer, formally considered, is that which is ascribed to the Spirit of God. And those who will not allow that the work here expressly assigned to the Spirit of adoption, or the Spirit of the Son, is sufficient for its end, or for the discharge of this duty — either in private or in the assemblies of the church — seem to deal somewhat severely with the church of God and all believers. There is no more required for prayer either way, than our crying, "Abba, Father," — that is, making our requests known to him as our Father in Christ [15] — with supplications and thanksgivings, as our state and occasions require. And is the aid of the Spirit of God not sufficient to enable us to do this? It was so of old; and that was for *all* believers as they were called to this duty with respect to their persons, families, or the church of God. If it is not so now, then it is either because God will not now communicate his Spirit to his children or sons, according to the promise of the gospel; or it is because, indeed, this grace and gift of his is despised by men, neglected, and lost. The former cannot be asserted on any safe grounds whatever; and it is our interest to consider the latter.

This twofold testimony, concerning the *promise* of the communication of the Holy Spirit or a Spirit of supplication to believers under the New Testament, and its *accomplishment*, sufficiently evinces our general assertion that there is a *particular work or special gracious operation of the Holy Ghost in the prayers of believers, enabling them to this*. For we intend no more by this than that they receive him by virtue of that promise (which the world cannot do), in order to [receive] his gracious efficiency in the

duty of supplication. And so he actually inclines, disposes, and enables them to cry "Abba, Father," or to call upon God in prayer, as their Father, by Jesus Christ. To deny this, therefore, is to rise up in contradiction to the express testimony of God himself, and to make him a liar by our unbelief. If we had nothing further to plead in this cause, this would be abundantly sufficient to reprove the petulant folly of those by whom this work of the Holy Ghost, and the duty of believers thereby to "pray in the Spirit," is scorned and derided (if we may use that despised and blasphemed expression of the Scripture).

For as to the ability of prayer which is thus received, there are some who know no more of it (as exercised in a way of duty) than the outside, shell, and appearance of it. And even that is not from their own experience, but from what they have observed in others.

There are not a few of these who confidently assert that such prayer is wholly a work of fancy, invention, memory, and wit, accompanied with some boldness and elocution, that is unjustly fathered on the Spirit of God, who is in no way concerned in this. And, it may be, they persuade many who are no better skilled in these things than themselves, that it is so indeed. However, those who have any experience of the real aids and assistances of the Spirit of God in this work and duty, any faith in the express testimonies given by God himself to this, cannot help but despise such fabulous imaginations on the part of those who are unskilled in it. You may as soon persuade them that the sun does not give light nor the fire give heat, that they do not see with their eyes nor hear with their ears, as to persuade them that the Spirit of God does not enable them to pray, or assist them in their supplications.

There might be some probability given to these assertions of the unskilled, as to the total exclusion of the Holy Ghost from any concern in prayer, if the persons whose prayerful duties they judge, were generally known to excel others in those natural endowments and acquired abilities to which this faculty of prayer is ascribed. But will this be allowed by them? Namely, will they allow that those who are thus able to pray, do so only by virtue of a spiritual glib [16] — that they excel others in imagination, memory, wit, invention, and elocution? It is known that those who are unskilled in such prayer will admit no such thing. Rather, in all other instances they represent those who pray in this way, as dull, stupid, ignorant, unlearned, and brutish. It is only in prayer that they somehow gain the advantage of those natural endowments! These two things are hardly consistent with common ingenuousness. For is it not strange that those who are so otherwise contemptible with respect to natural and acquired endowments in all other things — whether of science or of prudence — should in this one duty or work of prayer, be so improved as to outdo the imitation of them by those who despise them? For just as these despisers *do* not, as they *will* not, pray as these skilled ones do, so the despisers' own hearts tell them they *cannot*. This is the true reason why they so despitefully oppose this praying in the Spirit, whatever pride or passion pretends to the contrary.

But things of this nature will again occur to us, and therefore it will not be further insisted on here. It has been proved that God promised a plentiful dispensation of his Spirit to believers under the New Testament to enable them to pray according to His mind. And it has been proved that, in general, this promise is accomplished in and towards all the children of God. Therefore, it remains in the second place, as to what we have proposed, that

we declare *what the work of the Holy Ghost is in them*, to this end and purpose — or how he is a Spirit of prayer or supplication to us.

1. **Act 2:33** "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. **Act 5:32** "And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

2. **Col 1:19** For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell; **Col 2:19** and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. **Eph 4:16** from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. **Col 3:1** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. [2] Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. [3] For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

3. Πνεῦμα δυνάμεως – *Pneuma dunameis*.

4. Eph 5.11.

5. ὁ Πατήρ [NT:3962]

6. העבדים וחשפחות אין קורין אותם לא אבא פלוני ולא אמא פלונית.

7. רוּחַ נְדִיבָה [OT:05081,07307]

8. Being frank and straightforward, open. Yet *nadiyb* in Psa 51.12 is variously translated generous, willing, or free.

9. אָבִי [OT:0001]

10. *Paraphrast*: someone who paraphrases.

11. אַבָּא

12. Βουλόμενος δεῖξαι γνησιότηατ, καὶ τῇ τῶν῾Εβραίων ἐχρήσατο γλώσσῃ· οὐ γὰρ εἶπε μόνον ὁ πατὴρ ἀλλ' ἀββᾶ ὁ πατὴρ, ὅπερ τῶν παίδων μάλιστά ἐστι τῶν γνησίων πρὸς πατέρα ῥῆμα.

13. χράζον [NT:2896]

14. φωνῇ μεγάλῃ [NT:5456,3173] *phone megale*. **Mat 27:50** And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

15. It is because Christ is the Son of God, and because we are adopted "in Christ," that God is *our* Father, in Christ. – WHG

16. *Glib*: Artfully persuasive in speech.

Chapter IV. The nature of prayer — Rom 8.26 explained and vindicated.

Prayer at present I take to be a *gift and ability, or a spiritual faculty of exercising faith, love, reverence, fear, delight, and other graces, in a way of vocal requests, supplications, and praises to God*: "In everything … let your requests be made known to God," Phi 4.6.

I affirm this gift and ability is bestowed; and by virtue of this, this work is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, in the accomplishment of the promise insisted on, crying "Abba, Father," in those who believe. And this is what we are to give an account of. In this we will assert nothing but what the Scripture plainly goes before us in, and what the experience of believers confirms, duly exercised in duties of obedience. And in the issue of our endeavor, we will leave it to the judgment of God and his church, whether they are "ecstatic, enthusiastic, unaccountable raptures" that we plead for, or a real gracious effect and work of the Holy Spirit of God.

The first thing we ascribe to the Spirit in this, is that he supplies and furnishes the mind with a due comprehension of *the matter of prayer*, or what ought to be prayed for, both in general and as to all our particular

occasions. Without this, I suppose it will be granted that no man can pray as he should; for how can any man pray who does not know what to pray for? Where there is not a comprehension of this, the very nature and being of prayer is destroyed. And in this, the testimony of the apostle is express:

Rom 8.26, "Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we do not know what we should pray for as we should: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

It is this expression alone which I urge at present: "We do not know what we should pray for as we should." This is generally supposed to be otherwise — namely, that men know well enough what they should pray for. Only, they are wicked and careless, and *will not* pray for what they know they should. I will make no excuse or apology for the wickedness and carelessness of men, which without a doubt, are abominable. Yet I must abide by the truth asserted by the apostle, which I will further evidence immediately: namely, that without the special aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit, no man knows what to pray for as he should.

Yet there is another relief in this matter, and so there is no need for any work of the Holy Ghost in this. And we will be accounted impudent if we ascribe anything to him of which there is a token pretense that it may be otherwise effected or provided for. There is such a great unwillingness to allow him either place, work, or office in the Christian religion or the practice of it! It is therefore pretended that, although men do not know what to pray for of themselves, this defect may be supplied in a prescribed form of words, prepared on purpose, to teach and confine men to what they are to pray for.

We may, therefore, dismiss the Holy Spirit and his assistance as to this concern of prayer. For the due matter of it may be so set down and fixed on

ink and paper, that the lowliest capacity cannot miss his duty in this! This, therefore, is what is to be tried in our ensuing discourse: namely, that because it is plainly affirmed that "we do not know" of ourselves "what we should pray for as we should" (which I judge to be universally true for *all* persons, those who prescribe prayers, as well as those for whom they are prescribed), and because the Holy Spirit helps and relieves us in this, we may or should relinquish and neglect his assistance, and rely only on those supplies which are invented or used to that end for which he is promised. Plainly put, the question is whether the word of God is to be trusted in this matter or not.

It is true, that whatever we ought to pray for is declared in the Scripture; and yes, it is summarily comprised in the Lord's Prayer. But it is one thing to have what we ought to pray for in the book, and another thing to have it in our minds and hearts — without which it will never be the due matter of our prayer. It is out of the "abundance of the heart" that the mouth must speak in this matter, Mat 12.34. There is, therefore, a threefold defect in us with respect to the matter of prayer, which is supplied by the Holy Spirit, and this cannot be supplied in any other way nor by any other means. And in this, he is a Spirit of supplication to us, according to the promise. [1] For —

1. *We do not know our own wants*;

2. *We do not know the supplies of them, that are expressed in the promises of God; and*,

3. *We do not know the end to which what we pray for is to be directed*, which I add to the former.

Without the knowledge and understanding of all these, no man can pray as he should; and we can in no way know them except by the aid and

assistance of the Spirit of grace. And if these things are manifest, it will be evident how in this first instance, we are enabled to pray by the Holy Ghost.

First. Our *wants*, as they are to be the *matter of prayer*, may be referred to three heads. And we *know* none of them *rightly* of ourselves, so as to make them the due subject of our supplications; and we know nothing at all about some of them:

1. This first consists in our *outward restraints*, pressures, and difficulties, which we desire to be delivered from, with all other temporal things in which we are concerned. In those things, it should seem wondrously clear that of ourselves we know what to pray for. But the truth is, whatever our sense may be of them and our natural desires about them, we do not know how and *when*, under what conditions and limitations, with what frame of heart and spirit, with what submission to the pleasure of God, they are to be made the matter of our prayers. Therefore, God calls most prayers about such matters a "howling," and not crying to him with the heart, Hos 7.14. [2] There is indeed a voice of nature crying in its distress to the God of nature; but that is not the duty of evangelical prayer which we inquire after. And men oftentimes most miss it when they think they are most ready and prepared for it. To know our temporal wants so as to make them the matter of prayer according to the mind of God, requires more wisdom than we are furnished with of ourselves. For "who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spends as a shadow?" Ecc 6.12. Often, believers are never more at a loss than [knowing] how to rightly pray about temporal things. No man is in pain or distress, or under any wants, where continuance would be destructive to his being, that he may not, indeed, he *ought* to make deliverance from them the matter of his prayer. So in that case he knows in some measure, or in general, what he ought to pray

for, without any special spiritual illumination. Yet men cannot understand of themselves the circumstances of those things, and in what respect they stand to the glory of God, and to the supreme end or highest good of the persons concerned. And it is with regard to these things alone that the matter of prayer can be made acceptable to God in Christ. They need an interest in that promise made to the church, that "they will all be taught by God." And this is so much more in those things which belong only to the conveniences of this life — of which no man, of himself, knows what is good for him or useful to him.

2. We have *internal wants* that are discerned in the light of a *natural conscience*: such is the *guilt of sin* which the conscience accuses us of — sins against natural light and the plain outward letter of the law. We know something about these things without any special aid of the Holy Spirit, Rom 2.14-15; [3] and desires for deliverance are inseparable from them. But we may observe two things:

(1.) That the knowledge which we have of this, of ourselves, is so *dark* and *confused* that we are in no way able to thereby rightly manage our *wants* in prayer to God. A natural conscience, awakened and excited by afflictions or other providential visitations, will reveal itself in unfeigned and severe reflections of guilt upon the soul. But until the Spirit convinces us of sin, all things are in such disorder and confusion in the mind, that no man knows how to make his address to God about it in a due manner. There is more required to rightly deal with God about the guilt of sin, than a mere sense of it. Men can proceed under that sole conduct and guidance, just as the heathens did in dealing with their supposed gods, without a due respect for the propitiation made by the blood of Christ. Indeed, prayer about the

guilt of sin, discerned in the light of a natural conscience, is but an "abomination." [4] Besides,

(2.) We all know how small a portion of the concern of believers lies in those things which fall under the light and determination of a natural conscience; for —

3. The things about which believers do and ought to principally address and deal with God in their supplications, are the *inward spiritual frames and dispositions of their souls*, with the actings of grace and sin in them. Concerning this, David was not satisfied with the confession of his original and all known actual sins, Psa 51.1-5; nor with an acknowledgment that "no one knows his own wanderings," which is why he desires cleansing from "unknown sins," Psa 19.12. But moreover, he begs God to undertake the inward search of his heart, to find out what was amiss or not right in him, Psa 139.23-24, knowing that God principally required "truth in the inward parts," Psa 51.6. Such is the work of sanctification carried on in the whole spirit and soul, 1Thes 5.23. [5]

The inward sanctification of all our faculties is what we want and pray for. Supplies of grace from God for this purpose, with a sense of the power, guilt, violence, and deceit of sin in its inward actings in the mind and affections, with other innumerable things belonging to this, make up the principal matter of prayer as it is formally a supplication.

Add to this that everything in which we have intercourse with God in faith and love, belongs to prayer; this is largely understood to be the whole duty of prayer. Similarly comprised in this duty are the acknowledgment of the whole mystery of his wisdom, grace, and love in Christ Jesus, along with all the fruits, effects, and benefits which we receive from it; all the workings and actions of our souls towards him, along with their faculties and

affections; in brief, every thing and every conception of our minds in which our spiritual access to the throne of grace consists, or which belongs to it, along with all occasions and emergencies of spiritual life.

Few are so ignorant or profane as to assert that we can have such an acquaintance with these things as to manage them acceptably in our supplications, without the grace of spiritual illumination from the Holy Ghost. Some, I confess, seem to be strangers to these things — yet this renders them of no less weight or moment.

Hence it comes to pass that the prayers of believers about these things, especially their confessions of what sense they have of the power and guilt of the inward actings of sin, have been exceedingly maligned and reproached by some. For out of their ignorance they cannot understand such things; out of their pride, heightened by sensuality of life, they despise and contemn them.

Secondly. The *matter of prayer* may be considered with respect to the promises of God. These are the measure of prayer, and they contain the matter of it. We are to pray for what God has promised, all that he has promised, and nothing else. For "secret things belong to the Lord our God" alone. But the declaration of his will and grace belongs to us, and it is our rule.[Deu 29.29] Therefore, there is nothing that we really do or may stand in need of, that God has not promised to supply, in such a way and under such limitations as may make it good and useful to us. And there is nothing that God has promised that we do not stand in need of, or that in some way or other we are not concerned with as members of the mystical body of Christ. Therefore, "we do not know what we should pray for as we ought," unless we know or understand the goodness, grace, kindness, and mercy, that is prepared and proposed in the promises of God. For how could we, seeing

that we are to pray for *all* that God has promised, and for nothing *except* what God has promised, and *as* he has promised it?

The inquiry that remains, therefore, is whether we of ourselves, without the special assistance of the Holy Spirit, understand these things or not. The apostle tells us that the "things of God," spiritual things, "no one knows, except the Spirit of God;" and we must receive the Spirit of God to "know the things that are freely given to us by God," 1Cor 2.11-12. These are the grace, mercy, love, and kindness of the promises, 2Cor 7.1. [6] To say that of ourselves we can perceive, understand, and comprehend these things, without the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, is to overthrow the whole gospel and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as demonstrated elsewhere.

But it may and will be said, "There is more stirred than needs to be in this matter. God help poor sinners, if all this is required for their prayers! Surely men may pray at a cheaper rate, and with much less trouble, or else very few will continue long in that duty." For some can see no necessity to thus understand the grace and mercy that is in the promises, as to prayer, and suppose that men know well enough what to pray for without it.

But those who speak in this way, do not know what it is to pray, nor are they willing to learn, it seems. For we are to pray *in faith*, Rom 10.14; and faith respects God's promises, Heb 4.1, Rom 4. Therefore, if we do not understand what God has promised, we cannot pray at all. It is marvellous what thoughts such persons have of God and themselves, who without a due comprehension of their own wants, and without an understanding of God's promises, in which all their supplies are laid up, "say their prayers," as they call it, continually. And indeed, in the poverty, or rather, in the misery of devised aids to prayer, this is not the least pernicious effect or consequent: that they keep men from searching the promises of God, by which they

might know what to pray for. Let the matter of prayer be so prescribed to men that they never need either to search their own hearts, or God's promises about it, and this whole work is dispatched out of the way. The soul is rightly prepared for this duty only when it understands its own condition, the supplies of grace provided in the promises, the suitableness of those supplies for its wants, and the means of its conveyance to us by Jesus Christ. It will immediately be declared that we have all this by the Spirit, and not otherwise.

Thirdly. As to the *matter* of prayer, I join the *end* we aim at in the things we pray for, and which we direct them to. And in this, also, we are at a loss in ourselves. Men may lose all the benefit of their prayers by proposing undue ends for themselves in the things they pray for. Our Savior says, "Ask, and you will receive." But the apostle James affirms of some, Jas 4.3, "You ask, and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it on your pleasures." To pray for anything, and not to expressly pray for the end to which God designed it, is to *ask amiss*, and to no purpose. Yet, whatever confidence we may have in our own wisdom and integrity, if we are left to ourselves, without the special guidance of the Spirit of God, our aims will never be suited to the will of God. There are countless ways and means by which we may and do fail in this way, when we are not under the actual conduct of the Spirit of God — that is, when our own natural and distempered affections intermix themselves in our supplications. There is nothing so excellent in itself, so useful to us, so acceptable to God, in the matter of prayer, that it may not be vitiated and corrupted, and prayer itself be rendered vain, by applying it to false or mistaken ends. In its proper place, we will see what the work of the Spirit is, to guide us in this.

1. **Eph 6:18** praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;
2. **Hos 7:14** They did not cry out to Me with their heart When they wailed [howled] upon their beds. "They assemble together for grain and new wine, They rebel against Me;
3. **Rom 2:14** for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, [15] who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*).
4. **Pro 15:8** The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright *is* His delight. **Luk 16:15** And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.
5. **1Thes 5:23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
6. **2Cor 7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Chapter V. The work of the Holy Spirit as to the matter of prayer.

These things are considerable as to the *matter of prayer*. And with respect to them, *we do not know of ourselves what* we should pray for, nor *how*, nor *when*. The first work of the Spirit of God, as a *Spirit of supplication* in believers, is to give them an understanding of all their *wants*, and of the *supplies* of grace and mercy in the promises. This causes such a sense of them to dwell and abide on their minds that, according to their measure, they are continually furnished with the *matter of prayer*, without which men *never* pray, and by which, in some sense, they pray *always*; for —

First. The Spirit alone gives us, and he alone is able to give us, such an understanding of our *own wants*, that we may be able to make our thoughts about them *known to God* in prayer and supplication. And what is said concerning our wants, is likewise said with respect to the whole matter of prayer by which we give glory to God, either in requests or prayers. I will manifest this in some instances, to which others may be reduced. [1]

1. The *principal matter* of our prayers *concerns faith and unbelief*. So the apostles prayed in a particular manner, "Lord, increase our faith;" and so the poor man prayed in his distress, "Lord, help my unbelief." I cannot think that those who never pray for the pardon of unbelief, for its removal, and for the increase of faith, ever pray rightly. If unbelief is the greatest of sins, and if faith is the greatest of the gifts of God, we are not Christians if these things are not one principal part of the matter of our prayers. To this end we must be convinced of the nature and guilt of unbelief, and also of the nature and use of faith. Without that conviction, we can neither know our own highest wants, nor what to pray for as we ought. Our Savior expressly declares that this is the special work of the Holy Ghost, Joh 16.8-9, "He will convince the world of sin, because they do not believe in me." I deny and *must* deny that anyone is or can be convinced of the nature and guilt of that unbelief, either in the whole or in its remainders — which the gospel condemns, and which is the great condemning sin under the gospel — without a special work of the Holy Ghost on his mind and soul. For unbelief, as it respects Jesus Christ — not believing in him, or not believing in him as we should — is a sin against the gospel. And it is by the gospel alone that we may be convinced of it; and that is by the ministration of the Spirit.

Thus, neither the light of a natural conscience nor the law will convince anyone of the guilt of unbelief with respect to Jesus Christ, nor instruct them in the nature of faith in him. No innate notions of our minds, no doctrines of the law, will reach to this. To think to teach men to pray, or to help them in praying, without a sense of unbelief, or of the remainders of it in its guilt and power — and without a sense of the nature of faith, with its necessity, use, and efficacy — is to say to the naked and the hungry, "Be

warmed and filled," and not to give them those things that are needful for the body. Therefore, this belongs to the work of the Spirit as a Spirit of supplication. Let men tear and tire themselves night and day with a multitude of prayers, if a work of the Spirit of God in teaching the nature and guilt of unbelief, and the nature, efficacy, and use of faith in Christ Jesus, do not go with it, all will be lost and perish. Yet it is marvellous to consider how little mention of these things occurs in most of those compositions which have been published to be used as forms of prayer. They are generally omitted in such endeavors, as if they were things in which Christians were very little concerned. The gospel positively and frequently determines the present acceptance of men with God or their disobedience, with their future salvation and condemnation, according to their faith or unbelief. For their obedience or disobedience are infallible consequents of that. Now, if things that are of the greatest importance to us, and on which depend all other things in which our spiritual estate is concerned, and these things are *not* a part of the subject-matter of our daily prayer, then I do not know what deserves to be.

2. The *matter* of our prayer respects the *depravation of our nature*, and our wants on that account:

- The darkness and ignorance that is in our understandings;
- Our unacquaintedness with heavenly things;
- Our alienation from the life of God thereby;
- The secret workings of the lusts of the mind under the shade and covert of this darkness;
- The stubbornness, obstinacy, and perverseness of our wills by nature;
- Our wills' reluctance toward and dislike of spiritual things;
- Innumerable latent guiles arising from this reluctance.

All of these keep the soul from a due conformity to the holiness of God. And so they are things which believers have a special regard to in their confessions and supplications. They know this is their duty, and find by experience that the greatest concern between God and their souls, as to sin and holiness, lies in these things. And they are never more concerned for themselves than when they find their hearts least affected with them. To give up entreating God about them — for mercy in their pardon, for grace in their removal, and the daily renovation of the image of God in them thereby — is to renounce all religion and all designs of living for God.

Therefore, without a knowledge, a sense, a due comprehension of these things, no man can pray as he should, because he is unacquainted with the matter of prayer, and he does not know what to pray for. But we cannot attain this knowledge of ourselves. Our nature is so corrupted as not to understand its own depravation. Hence some absolutely deny this corruption, thus taking away all necessity for laboring after its cure and the renovation of the image of God in us. And hereby they overthrow the prayers of all believers, which the ancient church continually pressed the Pelagians with. Without a sense of these things, I must profess that I do not understand how any man can pray. And as was said, we do not have this knowledge of ourselves. Our nature is blind, and cannot see them; it is proud, and will not own them; it is stupid, and senseless of them. It is the work of the Spirit of God alone to give us a due conviction of, a spiritual insight into, and a sense of the concern of these things. I have so fully proved this elsewhere, as not to insist on it here again.

It is not easy to conjecture how men pray, or what they pray about, who do not know *the plague of their own hearts*. Indeed, this ignorance, lack of light into, or conviction of, the depravation of their nature — and the

remainders of it even in those who are renewed, with the fruits, consequents, and effects of it — are the principal cause of men's barrenness in this duty. It is such that they can seldom go beyond what is prescribed to them. And from this, they can also satisfy themselves with a set or frame of well-composed words. They might easily discern that their own condition and concern are not at all expressed in these, if they were acquainted with them. I do not fix measures for other men, nor give bounds to their understandings. Only, I will take leave to profess, for my own part, that I cannot conceive or apprehend how any man does or can know what to pray for as he should, in the whole compass and course of that duty, if he has no spiritual illumination enabling him to discern, in some measure, the corruption of his nature, and the internal evils of his heart. If men judge that the faculties of their souls are undepraved, their minds are free from vanity, their hearts are free from guile and deceit, their wills are free from perverseness and carnality, I do not wonder on what grounds they despise the prayers of others, but would wonder on what grounds they might find real humiliation and fervency in their own.

To this I may add the irregularity and disorder of our affections. These, I confess, are discernible in the light of nature. And rectifying them, or attempting to, was the principal end of the old philosophy. But the chief respect it had to them on this principle, is that they disquiet the mind, or erupt into outward expressions by which men are defiled, dishonored, or distressed. This is how far natural light will go. And by this light, in the working of their consciences, as far as I know, men may be *put to prayer* about them. But the chief depravation of the affections lies in their aversion to spiritual and heavenly things.

They are, indeed, sometimes ready to like spiritual things under false notions of them, and to like divine worship under superstitious ornaments and meretricious [2] dresses. In this respect, they are the spring and life of all that devotion which is in the church of Rome. But take heavenly and spiritual things in themselves, with respect to their *proper* ends, and there is a dislike of them and an aversion to them in all our affections, which are corrupted. These variously act themselves, and influence our souls to vanities and disorders in all holy duties. No man knows what it means to pray, who is not exercised in supplications for mortifying, changing, and renewing these affections which are spiritually irregular. And yet it is the Spirit of God alone which reveals these things to us, and gives us a sense of our concern in them. I say, the spiritual irregularity of our affections, and their aversion to spiritual things, is discernible in no other light than supernatural illumination. For if spiritual things cannot be discerned without that, as the apostle assures us they cannot, 1Cor 2.14, [3] then it is impossible that the disorder of our affections can do so. If we do not know the true nature of an object, we cannot know the actings of our minds towards it. Therefore, although there is an innate, universal aversion to spiritual things in our affections, seeing that by nature we are wholly alienated from the life of God, it cannot be *discerned* by us in any light except that which reveals these spiritual things to us. Nor can any man be made sensible of the evil and guilt of that disorder, who does not also have a love implanted in his heart for those things which the heart finds obstructed thereby. Therefore, the mortification of these affections, and their renovation with respect to spiritual and heavenly things — being no small part of the matter of the prayers of believers, and a special part of their duty — they have no other acquaintance with them or sense of them

except as they receive them by light and conviction from the Spirit of God. Those who are destitute of this, must necessarily be strangers to the life and power of the duty of prayer itself.

As it is with respect to sin, so it is with respect to God and Christ, and the covenant, grace, holiness, and privileges. We have no spiritual conceptions about them, no right understanding of them, no insight into them, except what is given to us by the Spirit of God. Without an acquaintance with these things, what are our prayers, or what do they signify? Men without such an acquaintance, may pray on to the world's end, [4] without giving anything of glory to God, or obtaining any advantage for their own souls.

And this I place as the *first part* of the work of the Spirit of supplication in believers: enabling them to pray according to the mind of God, which *they do not know how to do* of themselves, as insisted on afterward in this passage of the apostle. When this is done, when a right apprehension of sin and grace and of our concern in them is fixed on our minds, then in some measure we always have the *matter of prayer* in readiness. Its words and expressions will easily follow, though the aid of the Holy Spirit is also necessary for this, as we will afterward declare.

And this is why the duty performed with respect to this part of the aid and assistance of the Spirit of God has lately been vilified and reproached by some (as said before). Formerly all their exceptions lay against some expressions, or against the weakness of some persons in conceived prayer, which they did not like. But now scorn is poured out on the matter of prayer itself, especially the humble and deep confessions of sin (upon its discovery mentioned before) which are made in the supplications of ministers and others. The things themselves are maligned as absurd, foolish, and irrational, as all spiritual things are to some sorts of men. Nor do I see how

this disagreement is capable of any reconciliation. For those who have no light to discern those respects of sin and grace which we mentioned, cannot help but think it is uncouth to have them continually made the matter of men's prayers. On the other hand, those who have received a light into sin and grace, and are acquainted with them by the Spirit of God, are troubled at nothing more than this: that they cannot sufficiently [5] abase themselves under a sense of them, nor in any words can they fully express that impression on their minds which is made by the Holy Ghost, nor can they clothe their desires for grace and mercy with words sufficiently significant and emphatic. And therefore this difference is irreconcilable by any except the Spirit of God himself. While it abides, those who respect in their prayers only what is discernible in the light of nature, or from a natural conscience, will keep themselves to general expressions and outward things. They will use words prepared for that purpose by themselves or others, do what we can to the contrary; for men will not be led beyond their own light, nor is it fitting that they should. And those who receive the supplies of the Spirit in this matter, will principally be conversant in their prayers, about the spiritual, internal concerns of their souls in sin and grace, however pleased others may be to despise and reproach them for it.

It is in vain to contend much about these things, which are regulated not by arguments but by principles. Men will invincibly adhere to the capacity of their light. Nothing can put an end to this difference except a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit from above. According to the promise, this is what we wait for.

Secondly. We *do not know what to pray for as we ought*, but the Holy Ghost acquaints us with the *grace* and *mercy* which are prepared in the *promises* of God for our relief. I declared before, that the knowledge of this

is necessary to enable us to direct our prayers to God in a due manner, and I suppose it will not be denied. For, what do we pray for? What do we have as a prospect and design in our supplications? What is it that we desire to be made partakers of? Praying only by saying or repeating so many words of prayer, whose sense and meaning are perhaps not understood by those who make use of them (as in the Papacy) — or doing so to rest in the saying or repetition of them, without having a special design to obtain some thing or things which we make known in our supplications — is unworthy the disciples of Christ, indeed of rational creatures. "Deal this way with your governor; will he be pleased with you, or accept you?" Mal 1.8. Neither ruler, friend, nor neighbor, would accept it from our hands, if we were to constantly make solemn addresses to them without any special design. We must "pray with our understanding;" 1Cor 14.15 that is, we must understand what we pray for.

And these things are none other than what God has promised. If we are not regulated by them in our supplications, we "ask amiss." It is, therefore, indispensably necessary to prayer that we know *what God has promised*, or that we should have an understanding of the grace and mercy of the promises. God knows our wants, what is good for us, what is useful to us, what is necessary to bring us to the enjoyment of himself, infinitely better than we do ourselves. Indeed, we know nothing of these things except what he is pleased to teach us. These are the things which he has "prepared" for us, as the apostle says in 1Cor 2.9; and what he has prepared, he declares in the promises of the covenant, for they are the declaration of the grace and good pleasure which he has purposed in himself. From this, believers may learn what is good for them, and what is lacking for them in the promises, more clearly and certainly than by any other means whatever. Therefore, we

learn from them what to pray for as we should. And this is another reason why men are so barren in their supplications: they do not know what to pray for, but are forced to take themselves to a confused repetition of the same requests — namely, their ignorance of the promises of God, and the grace exhibited in them.

Our inquiry, therefore, is by what way or means we come to an acquaintance with these promises. All believers have this in some measure, some more full and distinct than others, but all have it in a useful sufficiency. And we say this acquaintance is by the Spirit of God, without whose aid and assistance we can neither understand them nor what is contained in them.

I confess that some, by frequent reading of the Scripture and only by the help of a *faithful memory*, may be able to express in their prayers the promises of God, without any spiritual acquaintance with the grace of them. By this they minister to others, but not to themselves. This remembrance of words or expressions does not belong to the special work of the Holy Ghost in supplying the hearts and minds of believers with the matter of prayer. Rather, this is what he does in this work: he opens their eyes, he gives an understanding, he enlightens their minds, so that they will perceive the things that are prepared for them by God, and that are contained in the promises of the gospel. And in this he represents them in their beauty, glory, suitableness, and desirableness to their souls. He makes them see Christ in them, all the fruits of his mediation in them, all the effect of the grace and love of God in them; the excellence of mercy and pardon, of grace and holiness, of a new heart, with principles, dispositions, inclinations, and actings — all as they are proposed in the truth and faithfulness of God.

Now, when the mind and heart are continually filled with an understanding and due apprehension of these things, it is always furnished with the matter of prayer and praise to God. Persons make use of this as they have actual assistance and utterance [6] given to them. And because the Holy Spirit implants a love for these things on the minds of believers, together with the knowledge of them, they are not only directed what to pray for by this, but they are excited and stirred up to seek the enjoyment of them with ardent affections and earnest endeavors. *This* is to pray. Among those on whose hearts these things are not implanted, some may, as observed before, make an appearance of it by expressing in prayer the words of the promises of God retained in their memories. Yet for the most part, they are not able to pray in any tolerable and useful manner; and they either wonder at or despise those who are so enabled.

But it may be objected that,

"Where there is any *defect* in this, it may be easily supplied. For if men are not acquainted with the *promises* of God themselves, in the manner described before, and do not know what they ought to pray for, others who understand the promises may *compose prayers* for their use, according to their apprehensions of the mind of God in them, which they may read. And so they will have the *matter of prayer* always in readiness."

I answer —

1. I do not know that anyone has a command or a promise of assistance to make or compose prayers that are to be said or read by others as their prayers. And therefore I expect no great matter from what anyone will do of that kind. The Spirit of grace and supplication is promised, as I have proved, *to enable us to pray*, not to enable us *to make or compose prayers for others*.

2. It savors of some unacquaintance with the promises of God and the duty of prayer, to imagine that the *matter* of them, in order to suit the various conditions of believers, can be pent up in any one *form* of man's devising. Much of what we are to pray about may be in general and doctrinally comprised in a form of words, as they are in the Lord's Prayer. This gives directions in and a boundary for our requests. But it is a fantasy to think that the things themselves could be prepared and suited for the condition and wants of those who are to pray.

3. There is a vast difference between *objectively proposing* good things to be prayed for in consideration of those who are to pray (which men may do), and implanting an acquaintance with them, and a love for them, upon the mind and heart: this is the work of the *Holy Ghost*.

4. When things are so prepared and cast into a *form of prayer*, those by whom such forms are used, no more understand them than if they had never been cast into any such form, unless the Spirit of God gives them an understanding; but the form itself is not a sanctified means for this. And where that understanding is given, there is no need for the form.

5. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to give believers such a *comprehension* of promised grace and mercy, that they may constantly apply their minds to it, or to those things which, in a special way, are suited to their present daily wants and occasions, with the frame and dispositions of their souls and spirit. This is what gives spiritual beauty and order to the duty of prayer — namely, suiting the wants and supplies of a thankful disposition and praises, of love and admiration, to the excellencies of God in Christ, and all by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. But when a person is made to pray by his directory, [7] for things that, although good in themselves, are not suited to his

present state, frame, inclination, wants, and desires, there is nothing but spiritual confusion and disorder.

Again; what we said concerning the *promises* must also be applied to all the *precepts* or commands of God. These in like manner are the *matter of our prayers*, both as to confession and supplication. Without a right understanding of them, we can perform no part of this duty as we should.

This is evident in the apprehension of those who, repeating the words of the Decalogue, subjoin [8] their acknowledgments of a desire for mercy with respect to the transgression of the law, I suppose, and their desire to have their hearts inclined to keep the law. But the law with all the commands of God are spiritual and inward. We cannot have a useful acquaintance with their true sense and importance, in their extent and latitude, except by the enlightening, instructing efficacy of the grace of the Spirit. And where this is given, the mind is greatly supplied with the true matter of prayer. For when the soul has learned the spirituality and holiness of the law — its extent to the inward frame and disposition of our hearts, as well as to our outward actions — and learned that it requires absolute holiness, rectitude, and conformity to God at all times and in all things, *then* the soul sees and learns its own discrepancy from it and its coming short of it — even when it is unblamable as to its outward acts and duties. [9] And from this proceed those confessions of sin, in the best and most holy believers, which those who do not understand these things, deride and scorn. By this means, therefore, the Holy Spirit helps us to pray, by supplying us with the due and proper matter of supplications — even by acquainting us and affecting our hearts with the spirituality of the command, and of our coming short of this in our dispositions and frequent inordinate actings of our minds and affections. The one who is instructed in this, will on all occasions be

prepared with a fullness of matter for confession and humiliation, and also with a sense of that grace and mercy which we stand in need of with respect to the obedience required of us.

Thirdly, He alone guides and directs believers to pray or ask for anything *according to right and proper ends*. For there is nothing so excellent in itself, so useful to us, and so acceptable to God, as the matter of prayer. But it may be vitiated, corrupted, and the prayer itself be rendered vain, by applying it to false or mistaken ends. And it is plain in the text under consideration, that in this case we are relieved by the Holy Ghost. For he "makes intercession for us according to God," helping our infirmities, and teaching us what to pray for as we should — that is, according to God's mind or his will, Rom 8.27. [10] He does this in us and by us, or he enables us to do so.

For the Spirit himself, *without us*, has no office to be performed immediately towards God, nor any nature that is inferior to the divine, in which he might intercede. The whole of any such work with respect to us is incumbent on Christ. He alone, and in his own person, performs what is to be done with God *for us*. What the Spirit does, he does *in and by us*. He therefore directs and enables us to make supplications "according to the mind of God." And in this, God is said to "know the mind of the Spirit;" that is, to know his end and design in the matter of his requests. God knows this; that is, he approves of and accepts it. So it is the Spirit of God who directs us as to the design and end of our prayers, that they may find acceptance with God.

Yet there may be, and I believe there is, more in that expression, "God knows the mind of the Spirit." For he works such high, holy, spiritual desires and designs in the minds of believers in their supplications, that God

alone knows and understands them in their full extent and latitude. Of ourselves, we are apt to fail and mistake, as declared from Jas 4.3.

I will not emphasize particulars here, but only mention two general ends of prayer to which the Holy Spirit keeps the minds of believers in all their requests, where he has furnished them with the *matter* of their requests according to the mind of God. For he not only makes *intercession in them* according to the mind of God with respect to the matter of their requests, but also with respect to the *end* which they aim at, that it may be accepted with him. He therefore guides them to design,

1. That all the *success of their petitions* and prayers may have an immediate tendency to the glory of God. It is he alone who enables them to subordinate all their desires to God's glory. Without his special aid and assistance, we would aim *at self only and ultimately*, in all we do. Our own profit, ease, satisfaction, mercies, peace, and deliverance, would be the end to which we would direct all our supplications; and by this, they would all be vitiated and become abominable.

2. He keeps them to this also: that the issue of their supplications may be the *improvement of holiness* in them, and thereby their conformity to God, with their nearer access to him. Where these ends are not found, the matter of prayer may be good and according to the word of God, and yet our prayers would be an abomination.

We may pray for mercy and grace, and the best promised fruits of the love of God; and yet for lack of these ends, we will find no acceptance in our supplications. To keep us to them is His work, because it consists in casting out all self ends and aims, bringing all natural desires in subordination to God, which he works in us if he works in us anything at all.

And this is the first part of the work of the Spirit towards believers as a Spirit of grace and supplication — he furnishes and fills their minds with the matter of prayer, teaching them thereby what to pray for as they should. And where this is not worked in some measure and degree, there is no praying according to the mind of God.

1. That is, be reduced in scope while retaining essential elements – these will encompass the essence of other instances.
2. *Meretricious*: showy or pretentious.
3. **1Cor 2:14** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.
4. Original wording, "Men without them may say on to the world's end…"
5. "Omnino oportet nos orationis tempore curiam intrare coelestem, illam utique curiam, in qua rex regum stellato sedet solio, circumdante innumerabili et ineffabili beatorum spirituum exercitu … Quanta ergo cum reverentia, quanto timore, quanta illuc humilitate accedere debet, à palude sua procedens et repens ranuncula vilis? Quam tremebundus, quam supplex, quam denique humilis et sollicitus, et toto intentus animo majestati gloriæ, in præsentia angelorum, in concilio justorum et congregatione assistere poterit miser homuncio?" — Bernard. *Serm. de quatuor orandi modis*.
6. That is, they are given the words to speak.
7. For example, *Directory of Devotional Prayers*, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*, or *Directory for Public Worship*.
8. *Subjoin*: tack on, append.
9. **Psa 18:23** I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity.
10. This is well explained by Origen on this verse: "Velut si magister suscipiens ad rudimenta discipulum, et ignorantem penitus literas, ut eum docere possit et instituere, necesse habet inclinare se ad discipuli rudimenta, et ipse prius dicere nomen literæ, ut respondendo discipulus discat, et sit

quodammodo magister incipienti discipulo similis, ea loquens et ea meditans, quæ incipiens loqui debeat ac meditari; ita et Sanctus Spiritus, ubi oppugnationibus carnis perturbari nostrum spiritum viderit, et nescientem quid orare debeat secundum quod oportet, ipse velut magister orationem præmittit, quam noster spiritus (si tamen discipulus esse Sancti Spiritus desiderat) prosequatur, ipse gemitus offert quibus noster spiritus discat ingemiscere, ut repropitiet sibi Deum." Damascen speaks to the same purpose, lib. iv. chap. 3; and Austin in various places, collected by Beda, in his comment on this.

Chapter VI. What the due manner of prayer consists in.

The Holy Spirit gives the *mind* a due apprehension of the *things we ought to pray for*, or furnishes it with the ***matter*** *of prayer*. Having done that, he moreover works upon the will and affections a due *sense and valuation* of them, with desires for them; the *due* ***manner*** *of prayer* consists in this. But these things are *separable*. The mind may have light to discern the things that are to be prayed for, and yet the will and affections may be dead to them, or unconcerned in them. There may be a gift of prayer founded on this, but the soul does not spiritually act towards God in its exercise — for light is the matter of *all* common gifts. And by virtue of a perishing illumination, a man may attain a gift in prayer which may be of use for the edification of others; for "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with." 1Cor 12.7 In the meantime, for the man who thus prays, it is not much different than it was with those of old who prayed in an unknown tongue: "his spirit prays, but his understanding is unfruitful." 1Cor 14.4 He prays by virtue of the light and gift that he has received, but his own soul is not benefited or improved by it. Only sometimes God makes

use of men's own gifts to convey grace into their own souls. But prayer, properly so called, *is the obediential acting of the whole soul towards God*. Therefore, —

First. Where the Holy Spirit completes his work in us as a Spirit of grace and supplication, he works on the will and affections to act obediently towards God in and about the matter of our prayers. Thus, when he is poured out as a Spirit of supplication, he fills those to whom he is communicated, with mourning and godly sorrow. They are to be exercised in their prayers as the matter requires, Zec 12.10. [1] He not only enables them to pray, but he works affections in them that are suitable to what they pray about.

And in this work of the Spirit lies the fountain of that inexpressible fervency and delight, of those enlarged laborings of mind and desires, which are in the prayers of believers, especially when they are under the power of more than ordinary influences from him. For these things proceed from the work of the Spirit on their wills and affections, stirring them up and carrying them forth to God, in and by the *matter* of their prayers. This is done in such a *manner* that no vehement working of natural affections can reach it. And therefore the Spirit is said to "make *intercession* for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom 8.26-27; [2] he *intercedes*. [3] He had just expressed his work in general by *helping*, [4] which intends help by working, by carrying us on in our undertaking in this duty beyond our own strength (for he helps us onward under our infirmities or weaknesses). And then his special acting is declared here by *making intercession*; that is, by an additional interposition, like that of an advocate for his client, pleading in his case what the client is not able to do by himself. This same word is used once in the service of a contrary design: speaking of the prayer

of Elijah, the apostle says, "How he makes intercession to God *against* Israel," Rom 11.2. In the same way, the Hebrew word *basar* [5] is constantly used in the Old Testament to "declare good tidings, tidings of peace;" Nah 1.15 but it is applied once in a contrary meaning, for tidings of evil and destruction, 1Sam 4.17. [6] The man that brought the news of the destruction of the army of the Israelites and of the taking of the ark by the Philistines is called *hamebasar*. [7] But the proper use of this word is to intercede for grace and favor; and the Spirit does this with unutterable groans. [8] We ourselves are said to "groan," Rom 8.23; that is, to humbly, mournfully, and earnestly desire. And here the Spirit is said to "intercede for us with groanings;" which can be nothing other than his working in us, and acting by us, that frame of heart and those fervent, laboring desires, which are thus expressed. And this is done with such a depth of intension and laboring of mind, that they cannot be uttered. He does this by the work now mentioned.

Secondly. Having truly affected the whole soul — having enlightened the mind in the perception of the truth, beauty, and excellence of spiritual things; engaged the will in the choice and prevalent love of them; excited the affections to delight in and desire them — there is worked in the soul, in the actual discharge of this duty of prayer, by the power and efficacy of His grace, such an inward laboring of heart and spirit, such a holy, supernatural desire and endeavor for a union with the things prayed for, in the enjoyment of them — that no words can utter or expressly declare it; that is, express it fully and completely. That is the sense of the place.

To avoid the force of this testimony, some (at least one) would have this intercession of the Spirit, be *the intercession of the Spirit in Christ for us*, *now at the right hand of God* — so that no work of the Spirit itself *in believers* is intended by it. Men sometimes make use of such irrational

evasions to escape the convincing power of light and truth. For this would be such a description of the intercession of Christ at the right hand of God, that it can scarcely be reconciled to the analogy of faith.[9] I declared elsewhere, and it is the common faith of Christians, that this is not a *humble, oral* supplication,[10] but a blessed representation of Christ's oblation, by which its efficacy is continued and applied to all the particular occasions of the church, or believers. But here it would be *reported as the laboring of the Spirit in Christ with unutterable groans*; the highest expression of a humble, burdened, concerned endeavor. Nothing is more unsuited to the present glorious condition of the Mediator. It is true that "in the days of his flesh" he prayed "with strong crying and tears," in a humble deprecation of evil, Heb 5.7. But a humble prostration and praying with unutterable groans is altogether inconsistent with his present state of glory, his fullness of power, his right to dispense all the grace and mercy of the kingdom of God. Besides, this exposition is as adverse to the context as anything that could be invented. In Rom 8.15, it is said that we "receive the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba, Father," the Spirit which "God sends forth into our hearts," Gal 4.6. And the blessed work of this Spirit in us is further described in Rom 8.16-17.[11] And upon that, verse 23,[12] having received "the first-fruits of this Spirit," we are said to "groan within ourselves;" to which it is added, that we do not know of ourselves what we ought to pray for, "that very Spirit," so given to us, so received by us, so working in us, "makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Therefore, without offering violence to the context, there is no place for the introduction of the intercession of Christ in heaven, especially under an expression that is contrary to its nature. It is mentioned afterward by the apostle, in its proper place, as a consequent and fruit of his death and

resurrection, verse 34.[13] And there he is said simply to plead, *entugchanein*;[14] but the Spirit here, in verse 26, is said to super-plead,[15] which implies an additional supply to what is in ourselves.

Yet, to countenance this other uncouth[16] exposition, emphasis is put on the beginning of both verses 26 and 27: for though *astheneia*[17] constantly in Scripture denotes any kind of infirmity or weakness, spiritual or corporeal, it is said here to be taken in the latter sense — for diseases, with troubles and dangers — which it nowhere signifies. The meaning would then be that, in such conditions, we do not know what to pray for, whether wealth, health, peace, or the like; but Christ intercedes for us. And this, they say, must be the sense of "helps in our weaknesses."[18]

Yet in the text it plainly denotes a help and assistance given to our weaknesses (that is, to us *who are weak*) in the discharge of the duty of *prayer* — as both the words themselves and the ensuing reasons for them evince. Therefore, neither the grammatical sense of the words, nor the context, nor the analogy of faith, will allow this new and uncouth exposition.

In like manner, it may be inquired why it is said that "the one who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is" Rom 8.27 — which plainly refers to some great and secret work of the Spirit in the heart of man. If the intercession of Christ is intended by this, then nothing is offered but this paraphrase: "And then God, by being a searcher of hearts, knows our wants exactly, and thus also understands the desire and intention of the Spirit of Christ." But these things are absurd,[19] and have no dependence on one another; nor would there be any need to mention the searching of our hearts in order to introduce the approbation of the intercession of Christ. But to return.

What is worked in the hearts of believers in their duty, is pervious [20] to none but Him that searches the heart. We ought to aim at this frame in all our supplications, especially in time of distress, troubles, and temptations. Such was the season especially intended here, when we are commonly most sensible of our own infirmities. And when we come short of this frame in some measure, it is from our unbelief, or carelessness and negligence; which God abhors. I acknowledge that there may be, that there *will* be, more earnestness and intension of mind, and of our natural spirit in this duty, at one time than another, as outward occasions or other motives excite or stir them up. So our Savior in his agony prayed more earnestly than usual — not with a higher exercise of grace, which always moved itself in him in perfection — but with a greater vehemence in the working of his natural faculties. So it may be with us at special times. And yet we are always to endeavor after the same aids of the Spirit, the same actings of grace, in every particular duty of this kind.

Thirdly. The Holy Spirit gives the soul of a believer a *delight in God* as the *object of prayer*. I will not insist on His exciting, moving, and acting all other graces that are required in the exercise of this duty, such as faith, love, reverence, fear, trust, submission, waiting, hope, and the like. I have proved elsewhere that the exercise of them all, in all duties, and of all other graces in like manner, is from him; and therefore I will not confirm the same truth here again. But this delight in God as the object of prayer, has a particular consideration in this matter. For without it, the duty ordinarily is not accepted with God, and it is a barren, burdensome task to those who perform it.

Now, this delight in God as the *object of prayer* is, for its substance, included in that description of prayer given to us by the apostle — namely,

that it is crying "Abba, Father." A filial, holy delight in God is included in this, such as children have in their parents in their most affectionate addresses to them, as declared. And we are to inquire what this delight in God consists in, or what is required for it, as the object of prayer. In this delight there is —

1. A sight or prospect of God as on a *throne of grace* — a prospect, I say, not by carnal imagination, but spiritual illumination. "By faith we see him who is invisible," Heb 11.27. For it is the "evidence of things not seen" that makes its proper object evident and present to those who believe. Such a sight of God on a throne of grace is necessary for this delight. Under this consideration, he is the proper object of all our addresses to him in our supplications: Heb 4.16, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The duty of prayer is described by its subject-matter, namely, "mercy" and "grace," and by its only object, "God on a throne of grace."

And this "throne of grace" is further represented to us by the place where it is erected or set up, and that is in the holiest or most holy place. For in coming to God on that throne, we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," Heb 10.19. And hereby the apostle shows in the expression, that he respects or alludes to the mercy-seat on the ark, covered with the cherubims, which represented a throne; and because of God's special manifestation of himself on that seat, it was called His throne; and it was a representation of Jesus Christ, as I have shown elsewhere.

Therefore, God on a throne of grace is ready, through Jesus Christ, to dispense grace and mercy to suppliant sinners. When God comes to execute judgment, his throne is represented otherwise. See Dan 7.9-10. [21] And when sinners take a view in their minds of God as he is in himself, and as he will

be to all outside of Christ, it ingenerates nothing but dread and terror in them, with foolish contrivances to avoid him or his displeasure, Isa 33.14; Mic. 6.6-7; Rev 6.16-17. [22] All these places and others testify that when sinners engage in serious thoughts and conceptions of the nature of God, and what they will encounter from him, all their apprehensions issue in dread and terror. This is not a frame in which they can cry, "Abba, Father." If they are delivered from this fear and bondage, it is by that which is worse — namely, carnal boldness and presumption, whose rise lies in the highest contempt of God and his holiness.

When men give themselves only to a perfunctory performance of this duty, "saying their prayers," — out of what conviction I know not, and without a due consideration of God and the regard He has for them — they but provoke him to his face in taking his name in vain. Nor do they have any delight in God in their approaches to him, however they may satisfy themselves in what they do.

Therefore, what is required in this, is a prospect of God, by faith, as being on a "throne of grace," as exalted in Christ to show mercy to sinners. So he is represented in Isa 30.18: "Therefore the Lord will wait, that he may be gracious, and therefore he will be exalted, that he may have mercy." Without this, we cannot draw near to him, or call upon him with delight, as becomes children crying, "Abba, Father." And by whom is this revealed to us? Is this a fruit of our own fancy and imagination? It may be so with some, to their ruin. But it is the work of the Spirit, who alone, in and through Christ, reveals God to us, and enables us to discern him in a due manner. Hence our apostle prays for the Ephesians that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of their

understanding being enlightened, they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," Eph 1.17-18.

All the acquaintance which we have with God, in a way of grace, is from the revelation made in us by his Spirit. See Col 2.1-2. [23] By him God says to us that "fury is not in him," and that if we lay hold on his arm, we may have peace, we *will* have peace, Isa 27.4-5. [24]

2. A sense of God's *relation to us as a Father* is required for this *delight*. By that name, and under that consideration, the Lord Christ has taught us to address ourselves to him in all our supplications. [25] And although we may use other titles and appellations in speaking to him, even those which he has given himself in the Scripture, or those which are analogous to it, it is this consideration that principally influences our souls and minds, that God is not ashamed to be called our Father, that "the Lord Almighty has said that he will be a Father to us, and that we will be his sons and daughters," 2Cor 6.18. Therefore, as a Father, he is the ultimate object of all evangelical worship, of all our prayers. So it is expressed in that holy and divine description of it given by the apostle in Eph 2.18: "Through Christ we have access by one Spirit to the Father." No tongue can express, no mind can reach, the heavenly placidness and soul-satisfying delight which are intimated in these words.

How full of sweetness and satisfaction it is to come to God as a Father, through Christ, by the help and assistance of the Holy Spirit, revealing him as a Father to us, and enabling us to go to Him as a Father! Without a due apprehension of God in this relation, no man can pray as he should. And we have no sense of this, we have no acquaintance with it, except by the Holy Ghost. For we do not consider God in a general manner, as he may be said

to be a Father to the whole creation, but in an especial, distinguishing relation — as he makes us his children by adoption. It is "the Spirit that bears witness with our spirit that we are thus the children of God," Rom 8.16, giving us the highest and utmost assurance of our estate of sonship in this world. And thus being the *Spirit of adoption*, it is by him alone that we have any acquaintance with our interest in that privilege.

Some may apprehend that these things belong but little, and very remotely, to the duty of prayer, and the assistance we receive by the Spirit in this. But the truth is, those who are so minded, upon consideration, know neither what it means to pray nor what belongs to prayer. There is nothing more essential to this duty than, in the performance of it, we address ourselves to God under the notion of a Father — that is, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him, our Father also. Without this, we cannot have that holy delight in this duty which is required of us; and the lack of it ordinarily ruins our design in prayer. We can have no spiritual, satisfactory sense of this, except what we receive by and from the Spirit of God.

3. There belongs to prayer, that boldness which we have in our access into the holy place, or to the throne of grace: "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," Heb 10.19, 22. Where there is a "spirit of fear to bondage" on men, they can never have any delight in their approaches to God. This fear is removed by the Spirit of grace and supplication: Rom 8.15, "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father." These things are opposed, and the one is only removed and taken away by the other. And so, where the "spirit of bondage to fear" abides, we cannot cry, "Abba, Father," or pray in a due manner. But "where the Spirit of the Lord

is, there is liberty," 2Cor 3.17. And this, as we render the word, consists in two things:

(1.) *In orandi libertate*; in the liberty of prayer.

(2.) *In exauditionis fiducia*; in the confidence of being heard.

(1.) There is an *enlarged liberty* and freedom of speech in prayer to God; so the word signifies. Boldness [26] is the same as freedom to say all that is to be spoken, [27] a confidence that countenances men in the freedom of speech according to the exigency of their state, condition, and cause. So the word is commonly used, as in Eph 6.19. [28]

Where there is servile fear and dread, the heart is restricted, bound up. It does not know what it may or may not utter, and it is pained about the results of all it thinks or speaks — or it cannot pray at all beyond what is prescribed for it to say, as it were, whether it will or not. But where this Spirit of liberty and boldness is found, the heart is enlarged with a true, genuine openness and readiness to express all its concerns to God as a child to its father. I do not say that those who have this aid of the Spirit always have this liberty in exercise, or that it is equally exercised. Its exercise may be variously impeded by temptations, spiritual indispositions, desertions, and by our own negligence in stirring up the grace of God. But believers always have it in the root and principle — all who have received the Spirit of adoption, and are ordinarily assisted in its use. Hereby they are enabled to comply with the blessed advice of the apostle: Phi 4.6, "Be concerned for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." The whole of our concerns in this world are to be committed to God in prayer, so that we will not retain any dividing cares in our own minds about them. And in this, the apostle would have us use a holy freedom and boldness in speaking to God on all

occasions, as the one who concerns himself with them. Hide nothing from God, which is what we do when we do not present it to him in our prayers. But use a full, plain-hearted, open liberty with him: "In everything let your requests be made known to God." He is ready to hear all that you have to offer him or plead before him. And in so doing, the "peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ," verse 7. This is ordinarily the condition of those who are found in diligent obedience to this command.

(2.) There is also a *confidence of acceptance* in it, or of being heard in prayer — that is, that God is well pleased with their duties, accepting both them and their persons in Jesus Christ. Without this, we can have no delight in prayer, or in God as its object, which vitiates the whole duty. When Adam thought there was no acceptance with God for him, he had no confidence of having access to him. Rather, as the first effect of folly that ensued upon the entrance of sin, he went to hide himself. And all those who have no ground of spiritual confidence for acceptance with Christ, only endeavor in their prayers to hide themselves from God by the duty they perform. They cast a mist about them, to obscure themselves from the sight of their own convictions, in which alone they suppose that God sees them also. But in such a frame, there is neither delight, nor enlargement, nor liberty, nor indeed prayer itself.

Now, this confidence or boldness which is given to believers in their prayers, by the Holy Ghost, does not respect the answer of every particular request, especially in their own understanding of it. Rather, it consists in a holy persuasion that God is well pleased with their duties, that he accepts their persons, and delights in their approaches to his throne. Such persons are not terrified with apprehensions that God will say to them, "Why do you

take my name into your mouths, or to what purpose are the multitude of your supplications? When you make many prayers, I will not hear." [29] "Will he," says Job, "plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me," Job 23.6. Indeed, they are assured that the more they are with God, the more constantly they abide with him, the better is their acceptance. For just as they are commanded to pray always and not to faint, so they have a sufficient warrant from the encouragement and call of Christ, to be frequent in their spiritual addresses to him. So he says to his church, Song 2.14, "O my dove, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice and your countenance is attractive." And also comprised in this is a due apprehension of the goodness and power of God, by which he is, in all conditions, ready to receive them and able to relieve them. The voice of sinners by nature is that God is austere, and not capable of condescension or compassion — let presumption and superstition pretend what they please to the contrary. And the proper acting of unbelief lies in limiting the Most Holy, saying, "Can God do this or that thing, which the supplies of our necessities call for; are they possible with God?" So long as either of these works in us with any kind of prevalence, it is impossible that we would have any delight in calling upon God. But we are freed from them by the Holy Ghost, in the representation he makes of the engaged goodness and power of God in the promises of the covenant; and this gives us boldness in his presence.

Fourthly. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer, to keep the souls of believers intent upon Jesus Christ, as the only way and means of acceptance with God. This is the fundamental direction for prayer now, under the gospel. We are now to *ask in his name*; [30] this was not done expressly under the Old Testament. Through him we act faith on God in all our

supplications; by him we have an access to the Father. We enter into the holiest through the new and living way that he has consecrated for us. The varied respect which faith has to Jesus Christ as mediator in all our prayers, is a matter worthy a particular inquiry, but it is not our present consideration, which is to declare the work of the Spirit alone. But this is a part of it: that He keeps our souls intent upon Christ, according to what is required of us, as he is the way of our approach to God, the means of our admittance, and the cause of our acceptance with him.

And where faith is not actually exercised to this purpose, all prayer is vain and unprofitable. Thus it is worth our inquiry, whether our duty in this is fulfilled with a few words, in which his name is expressed with little spiritual regard to him.

It is the work of the Holy Ghost to enable us for this. He glorifies Jesus Christ in the hearts of believers, Joh 16.14. And he does this when he enables them to act faith on him in a due manner. So the apostle expressly says: Eph 2.18, "Through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father." It is through Jesus alone that we have our access to God, and that is by faith in him. So we have our access to God in justification: Rom 5.2, "By whom we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand." And by Jesus we have our actual access to God in our supplications, when we draw near to the throne of grace. But this is by the Spirit. He is the one who enables us to this, by keeping our minds spiritually intent on Jesus in all our addresses to God. This is a genuine effect of the Spirit *as* he is the "Spirit of the Son." Under this consideration, in a special manner, he is bestowed on us to enable us to pray, Gal 4.6. And believers have a refreshing experience of this in themselves; nor does anything leave a better savor or relish on their

souls than when, in the exercise of faith, they have had their hearts and minds kept close on Christ, the mediator in their prayers.

I might provide more instances in the declaration of the work of the Holy Ghost in believers, like being a Spirit of grace and supplication. But my design is not to declare what may be spoken, but to speak what ought not to be omitted. Many other things might be added, therefore, but these will suffice to give an express understanding of this work to those who have any spiritual experience of it. And those who do not, will not be satisfied with volumes to the same purpose.

Yet something may be added here to free our passage from any just exceptions. For it may be that some think these things are not pertinent to our present purpose, which is to discover the nature of the duty of prayer, and the assistance which we receive in it by the Spirit of God. Now, this is only in the words that we use to God in our prayers, and not in that spiritual delight and confidence which have been spoken to. Those, with other graces (if they may be so esteemed), are of another consideration.

Ans. 1. It may be that some think so; and it may also be (and is very likely) that some who will be talking about these things, are utterly ignorant of what it is to pray in the Spirit, and of the whole nature of this duty. Not knowing the thing, therefore, they hate the very name of it. Indeed, it will be uncouth to all who are in no way interested in the grace and privilege intended by it.

The objections of such persons are like the strikes of blind men: whatever strength and violence are in them, they always miss the mark. Such are the fierce arguings of most against this duty. They are full of fury and violence, but never touch the matter intended.

Ans. 2. My design is to reveal the nature of praying in the Spirit in general, so that with it I may declare what furthers it and what hinders it. For if there are any such ways of praying which men use or oblige themselves to, which do not comply with, or are not suited to promote, or are unconcerned in, or do not express those workings of the Holy Ghost which are so directly assigned to Him in the prayers of believers, then they are all nothing but means of quenching the Spirit, of disappointing the work of his grace, and of rendering the prayers themselves unacceptable to God. It is at least apparent that most of the ways and modes of prayer used in the Papacy are inconsistent with, and exclusive of, the whole work of the Spirit of supplication.

1. **Zec 12:10** "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.
2. **Rom 8:26** Likewise the Spirit also **helps** in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes **intercession** for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. [27] Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.
3. ὑπερεντυγχάνει [NT:5241] *huperentugchanei* – interceding or pleading for someone.
4. συναντιλαμβάνεται [NT:4878] *sunantilambanetai* – to lay hold along with, strive to obtain with others.
5. בָּשַׂר [OT:01319 *basar*] – to bear news, publish.
6. **1Sam 4:17** So the **messenger** answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured."
7. הַמְבַשֵּׂר.
8. στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις [NT:4726,215] *stenagmois alaletois*.
9. See note at .
10. Owen distinguishes what the Spirit does *in us*, from what Christ does *for us* at the right hand of God. **Rom 8:34** *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

11. **Rom 8:16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.
12. **Rom 8:23** Not only *that*, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.
13. **Rom 8:34** Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.
14. ἐντυγχάνειν [NT:1793] *entugchanein* – to entreat or plead.
15. ὑπερεντυγχάνει [NT:5241] *huper-entugchanein* – to intercede or plead for someone; the prefix *huper* indicates above in degree.
16. *Uncouth*: strange, foreign, or clumsy (unskilled).
17. ἀσθένεια [NT:769] – weakness.
18. συναντιλαμβάνεται ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν, *sunantilambanetai tais astheneiais hemoon.*
19. Owen gave the Greek, ἀπροσδιόνυσα, *aprosdionusa*.
20. *Pervious*: Admitting passage or entrance (antonym *impervious*).
21. **Dan 7:9** "I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. His throne *was* a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; [10] A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.
22. **Isa 33:14** The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who

among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" **Mic 6:6** With what shall I come before the LORD, *And* bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? [7] Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? **Rev 6:16** and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! [17] "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

23. **Col 2:1** 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, [2] that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ;

24. **Isa 27:4** Fury *is* not in Me. Who would set briers *and* thorns Against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. [5] Or let him take hold of My strength, *That* he may make peace with Me; *And* he shall make peace with Me."

25. **Mat 6:9** "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name."

26. Παῤῥησία [NT:3954] *parresia* – confidence, freedom of speech.

27. Owen compares *parresia*, confident speech, with πανρησία, *pan-resia*, breadth or openness of speech.

28. **Eph 6:19** that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth **boldly** to make known the mystery of the gospel,

29. Inference from Jer 44.26; excerpts from Isa 1.11, 15.

30. **Joh 14:13** "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **Joh 16:26-27** "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; [27] "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.

Chapter VII. The nature of prayer in general; its forms — Eph 6.18

The nature of prayer in general, with respect to forms of prayer and vocal prayer — Eph 6.18 explained and vindicated.

The duty I am endeavoring to express is that enjoined in Eph 6.18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching to this with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Some have boldly advanced a fantasy (what will enmity to the holy ways of God not put men upon?) that "praying in the Spirit" intends only praying by virtue of an extraordinary and miraculous gift. But the use of it is enjoined here for *all* believers, none excepted, men and women; and I suppose all and every one of them did not have that extraordinary, miraculous gift which some fancy is intended in that expression. And the performance of this duty is enjoined in the manner prescribed: "always," or as we say, "in every season" [1] — that is, in those just and due seasons of prayer as duty and our occasions call for. But the apostle expressly confines the exercise of extraordinary gifts to some certain seasons when, under some circumstances, they may be needful or useful for edification, 1Cor 14.

There is therefore a " praying in the Spirit," which is the constant duty of all believers. And it is a great reproach to the profession of Christianity, where that term itself is a matter of contempt.

If there is anything in it that is "foolish, conceited, fanatical," the holy apostle must answer for it — indeed, the One by whom he was inspired. But if this is the expression of God himself, of that duty which he requires of us, then I would not willingly be among the number of those by whom the term is derided, whatever their pretenses may be. Besides, in the text all believers are said "to pray in the Spirit at all seasons," and "with all prayer and supplication" [2] — that is, with all manner of prayer, as our own occasions and necessities require. Certainly by virtue of this rule, a man can scarcely judge himself obliged to confine his performance of this duty, to a prescribed form of words. For a variety in our prayers is enjoined here, commensurate with the various occasions of ourselves and of the church of God. Thus I do not know how we can comply with it in the constant use of any one form. Those who do, are left to their liberty. And we are obliged to this, "diligently watching to this very end," [3] so that our prayers may be suited to our occasions. The one who can divide this text, or cut it out to make a garment with which to clothe set forms of prayer, will reveal an admirable dexterity in the use and disposal of a text of Scripture. [4]

Yet neither do I conclude from this that all such forms of prayer are unlawful — only that another way of praying is enjoined here. I suppose this is unquestioned for all impartial searchers of truth. And doubtless, those who endeavor to comply with it are not to be blamed. If persons in the daily, constant reading of any book whatever, merely of a human composition, are able to rise up in response to this duty of "praying always with all manner of prayer and supplication in the Spirit," or in the exercise

of the aid and assistance received from Him, and His holy acting of them as a Spirit of grace and supplication, endeavoring, laboring, and watching to this, then I will say no more than this: they have attained what I cannot understand.

The sole inquiry remaining is this: how believers are enabled to pray, those in whose minds the Holy Ghost thus works as a Spirit of grace and supplication. And I say in answer to this, that those who are thus affected by him never lack a gracious ability to make their addresses to God in *vocal prayer*, so far as needful for them in their circumstances, callings, states, and conditions. And this is what is called the *gift of prayer*. I speak of ordinary cases; for there may be such interpositions of temptations and desertions, that the soul, being overwhelmed by them, may for the present be able only to "mourn as a dove," or to "chatter as a crane" Isa 38.14 — that is, not to express the sense of their minds clearly and distinctly, but only, as it were, to mourn and groan before the Lord in brokenness of spirit and expressions.

But this also is sufficient for their acceptance in that condition. There are few believers that have not more or less experienced this, at one time or other. As for those whose devotion discharges itself in a formal course of the same words, as it necessarily is in the Papacy — in which for the most part they do not understand the meaning of the words they use — they are strangers to the true nature of prayer, or at least to the work of the Spirit in it. And those supplications which are not variously influenced by the varying spiritual conditions of those who make them, according to the variety of our spiritual exercises, are like one constant tone or noise, which has no harmony or music in it. I say, therefore that —

1. The things insisted on are in some *degree* and *measure* necessary to all acceptable prayer. The Scripture assigns them to prayer and, by their own experience, believers find they are necessary to it. For we do not discuss prayer as the working of nature, in its restrictions and difficulties, towards the God of nature — thereby expressing dependence on him, and acknowledging his power. In this sense, *all flesh* comes to God in one way or other, under one notion or other. Nor is prayer coming to God upon those cries which legal convictions wrest from those who fall under their power. Rather, we treat prayer only as it is required of believers *under the gospel*, as they have "access through Christ by one Spirit to the Father." Eph 2.18 And,

2. Those in whom this work is wrought by the Holy Spirit in any degree, do not ordinarily lack an ability to express themselves in this duty, so far as it is needful for them. It is acknowledged that an ability in this will be greatly increased and improved by exercise. That is not only because the exercise of all moral faculties is the genuine way to strengthen and improve them, but principally because it is instituted, appointed, and commanded by God to that end. God has designed the *exercise of grace* for the means of its growth; and he gives his blessing in answer to his institution. But the nature of the thing itself requires a performance of the duty that is suitable to the condition of the one who is called to it. If men do not grow up to further degrees in that ability, by exercise in the duty itself — by stirring up the gifts and graces of God in them — it is their sin and folly. [5] And hence it follows,

3. That although *set forms of prayer* may be *lawful* for some, as it is pretended, they are *necessary* to none — that is, to no *true believers* — as to acceptable, evangelical prayer. But whoever is made a partaker of the

work of the Spirit of God in this — which He infallibly effects in everyone who is enabled through Him to cry, "Abba, Father" (as every child of God is) — will be able to pray according to the mind and will of God, if he does not neglect the aid and assistance offered to him for that purpose.

Therefore, to plead for the necessity of forms of prayer for believers, beyond what may be doctrinal or instructive in them, is a fruit of inclination to parties, or of ignorance, or of the lack of due attendance to their own experience.

What use *forms of prayer* may be to those who are not *regenerate*, and therefore have not received the Spirit of adoption, does not belong directly to our disquisition. Yet I must say that I do not clearly understand the advantage they provide to them, except as a contrivance to *relieve them in that condition*, without a due endeavor to *deliver them from it*. For these persons are of two sorts:

(1.) Those who are *openly* under the power of sin, for their minds are not being effectively influenced by any convictions. These seldom pray unless it is under dangers, fears, troubles, pains, or other distresses. When they are struck, they will cry — "even to the Lord they will cry," Psa 18.41 and not otherwise. Their design is to address their special occasions, and the present sense which they have of it. How can any man conceive that they should be supplied with forms of prayer that express their sense, conceptions, and affections, in their particular cases? It is easily supposed how ridiculously they may mistake themselves in reading those prayers which are in no way suited to their condition. A *form* to such persons may prove little better than a *charm*; and their minds may be diverted by it from that performance of duty which the light of nature would direct them to. Jonah's mariners in the storm "cried every one to his god," and called on Jonah to do so too Jon 1.5-

6. The substance of their prayer was that God would "think upon them, that they might not perish." Men in such condition, if not diverted by this pretended relief (which indeed is none) will not lack words to express their minds, so far as there is anything of prayer in what they do — and beyond that, whatever words they are supplied with, they are of no use or advantage to them. It is possible when they are left to work naturally towards God, however unskilled and rude their expressions may be, a deep sense may be left upon their minds, with a reverence for God, and remembrance of their own error, which may be of use to them. But the bounding and directing of the workings of natural religion by a form of words — perhaps little suited to their occasions and not at all to their affections — tends only to stifle the operation of an awakened conscience, and to release them to their former security.

(2.) There are others who, by education and the power of convictions from the word, by one means or another, are so far brought under a sense of the authority of God, and of their own duty, as to *conscientiously* attend to *prayer* according to their light, as they do to other duties also.

Now, the case of these men will be more fully determined afterward, when the whole use of the forms of prayer will be spoken to. For the present, I will only say that I cannot believe, until further convinced, that anyone whose duty it is to pray, is not able to express his requests and petitions in [his own] words, so far as he is affected with the matter of them in his mind. And what he does beyond that, by any advantage, does not belong to prayer. Men may, by sloth, and other vicious distempers of mind — especially by negligence in getting their hearts and consciences duly affected with the matter and object of prayer — keep themselves under a real or supposed disability in this matter. But because prayer in this sort of

person is an effect of common illumination and grace, which are also from the Spirit of God, if persons really and sincerely endeavor for a due sense of what they pray for and about, the Spirit will not be lacking to help them express themselves so far as it is necessary for them, either privately or in their families. But those who never enter the water except with flotation devices [6] under them, will scarcely ever learn to swim. And it cannot be denied that the constant and unvaried use of set forms of prayer may become a great occasion to quench the Spirit, and hinder all progress or growth in gifts or graces. When each one has done what he can, it is his best, and it will be accepted by Him, it being according to what he has, before that which is none of his. [7]

1. ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ, *en panti kairoo* – in every season or time.
2. διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως, and ἐν πάσῃ προσευχῇ καὶ δεήσει.
3. εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἀγρυπνοῦντες.
4. Owen does not fully address corporate prayer here. If a congregation prays together, as a whole, it must have a set form of prayer, or it will sound lke the cacophony prohibited in 1Cor 14.23. That seems to be the instance Owen does not consider unlawful. Yet even if someone prays on behalf of the congregation (1Cor 14.16), it may be insincere or inappropriate for particular persons in the congregation to say "Amen" to it, because of their current spiritual condition. That is the point he is making here. For them, it might not be praying "in the Spirit,"as their own supplication. Though he doesn't mention it, it could be prayed as an intercessory prayer on behalf of others in the congregation. Owen will address the use of *Psalms* as written prayers, on . – WHG
5. **Rom 12:6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; [7] or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; [8] he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **2Tim 1:6** Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
6. Originally, "flags or bladders."
7. Better to come as a pauper, giving what you have, than to give from another's purse. – WHG

Chapter VIII. The duty of external prayer by virtue of a spiritual gift, explained and vindicated.

What we have discussed up to here concerning the work of the Spirit of grace and supplication in enabling believers to pray, or to cry "Abba, Father," belongs principally to the *internal, spiritual nature of the duty*, and the exercise of grace in this duty. In this, we have only diverted occasionally to consider the *interest of words*, and the use of *set forms*, either freely or imposed. And indeed, what has been evinced from Scripture testimony on the matter, renders all further dispute about these things needless. For if the things mentioned are required for all acceptable prayer, and if they are truly effected in the minds of all believers by the Holy Ghost, then it is evident how little use remains for such pretended aids.

But moreover, prayer falls under another consideration: namely, as to its *external performance*, and as the duty is discharged by anyone in lesser or greater societies, in which their conjunction with him, their communion in the duty, and consequently their edification in the whole, depend on his words and expressions. This is the will of God: that in assemblies of his appointment, such as churches and families, and occasional meetings of two

or more gathered in the name of Christ, one should pray on behalf of himself and the rest who join with him. Thus ministers are enabled to pray in church-assemblies, as other Christians pray in occasional meetings of the disciples of Christ in his name, parents in their families, and every believer privately for himself.

There is a *spiritual ability given to men by the Holy Ghost, by which they are enabled to express the matter of prayer, as taught and revealed in the manner described before, in words fitted and suited to lead their own minds and the minds of others on to a holy communion in the duty, to the honor of God and their own edification*.

I do not confine the use of this ability to assemblies. Everyone may, and usually is to make use of it for himself also, according to the measure which he has received. For if a man does not have an ability to pray for himself in private and alone, then he can have none to pray in public and in societies. Therefore, take prayer as *vocal*, without which adjunct it is not complete, and this ability belongs to the nature and essence of prayer. [1] And this also is from the Spirit of God.

This is what meets with such contradiction and opposition from many, and which has other things set up in competition with it, indeed, to the exclusion of it, even from families and prayer closets. We will examine what those are afterward. Vocal prayer is judged by some not only to be separable from the work of the Spirit of prayer, but in no way belonging to it. They say, "it is a fruit of wit, fancy, memory, elocution, volubility and readiness of speech" — namely, in those in whom, on other accounts, they acknowledge none of these things exist, at least in no considerable degree! Some time ago, they indeed defended themselves against any esteem of this ability, by crying out that "all those who thus prayed by the Spirit, as they

call it, only babbled and talked nonsense." But those who have any sobriety and modesty are convinced that most of those who pray according to the ability received, use words of truth and soberness in its exercise. It is but a sorry relief that any can find in cavilling [2] at some expressions which, perhaps good and wholesome in themselves, do not suit their palates. Or if they seem to miss having due order and decency, their failure is not to be compared with the extravagances of some (considering the nature of the duty) in supposedly quaint and elegant expressions used in this duty. [3]

But in this, they resort to this claim: that this ability is only the effect of the natural endowments mentioned before, which they think are offset by a boldness and confidence that are little less than intolerable impudence. If seems that it is this way with all those who desire to pray as God enables them, that is, according to His mind and will — if anything in the light of nature, the common voice of mankind, examples of Scripture, and express testimonies and commands, are able to declare what that is. I will therefore make way for the declaration and confirmation of the truth asserted, by the ensuing observations.

1. *Every man is to pray or call upon God, as he is able*, with respect to his own condition, relationships, occasions, and duties. Certainly there is not a man in the world who has not forfeited all his reason and understanding to atheism, or utterly buried all their operations under the fury of brutish affections, that is not convinced it is his duty to pray to the deity he owns, in words of his own, as well as he is able. For this, and none other, is the genuine and natural notion of prayer. This is implanted in the heart of mankind, which they need not be taught or directed to. I would hope there are but few in the world, especially of those who are called Christians, that at one time or other do not so pray. The artificial help of constant forms is

an arbitrary invention. And there are those who, for the most part, resort to other reliefs. They may read prayers composed for some good end and purpose, though not absolutely for their situations, as to the present state of their minds, and the things they would pray for (which is absolutely impossible). As I conceive of it, they cannot help but be conscious sometimes, not only of the weakness of what they do, but of their neglect of the duty which they profess to perform. And there are those who are diverted from the dictates of nature, and the light of Scripture directions, by the prevalence of ignorance, the power of prejudice, and an infatuation with superstition. They say a "paternoster" for their prayer, maybe an "ave" or "credo," intending it for this or that end, or for the benefit of this or that person maybe, or to obtain what is in no way mentioned or included in what they utter. There is nothing of prayer in it, but a mere taking of the name of God in vain, with the horrible profanation of a holy ordinance.[Exo 20.7]

Persons tied to such rules and forms never pray in their lives, except in their occasional ejaculations which break from them almost by surprise. And there has not been any one more effectual means of bringing unholiness into the Christian world, with an ungodly course of behavior, than this one of teaching men to satisfy themselves in this duty of prayer, by saying, reading, or repeating the words of other men, which they may not understand, and certainly are not affected by in a due manner. For it is this duty by which our whole course is principally influenced.

Let men say what they will, our conduct in walking before God, which principally regards the frame and disposition of our hearts, is influenced and regulated by our attendance to and performance of this duty. The one whose prayers are hypocritical, is a hypocrite in his whole course. And the one who is only negligent in them, is equally negligent in all other duties.

Now, because our whole obedience to God ought to be our "reasonable service," Rom 12.1, how can it be expected that it would be so when the foundation of it is laid in such an irrational supposition, that men should not pray themselves what they are able, but instead should read the forms of others — forms which they do not understand?

2. All the *examples* we have in the Scripture of the prayers of the holy men of old, either under the Old Testament or the New, were all the *effects of their own ability* in expressing the gracious conceptions of their minds, worked in them by the Holy Ghost in the way and manner described before. I call it *their own ability*, in opposition to all outward aids and assistances from others, or an antecedent prescription of a form of words to them. Not one instance can be given to the contrary. Sometimes it is said they "spread forth their hands," sometimes that they "lifted up their voices," sometimes that they "fell upon their knees and cried," sometimes that they "poured out their hearts" when overwhelmed — all according to present occasions and circumstances. The solemn benediction of the priests, instituted by God, like the present forms in the administration of the sacraments, were of another consideration, as will be shown. And as for those who, by immediate inspiration, gave out and wrote discourses in the form of prayers which were mystical in part and prophetic in part, we have given an account concerning them before. Some indeed plead that the church of the Jews, under the second temple, had various forms of prayers in use among them, even at the time when our Savior was conversant in the temple and their synagogues. But they pretend and plead what they cannot prove; and I challenge any learned man to give but a tolerable evidence for the assertion. For what is found to that purpose among the Talmudists, is mixed with such ridiculous fables that it fully defeats its own evidence — such as the first,

suiting the number of their prayers to the number of the bones in the back of a man! [4]

3. The *commands* which are given to thus pray according to our own *abilities*, are no more or less than *all the commands* we have in the Scripture to pray at all. Not one of them has any regard or respect to outward forms, aids, or helps of prayer.

And the manner of prayer itself is so described, limited, and determined, that no other kind of prayer can be intended. For we are commanded to "pray in the Spirit;" to pray earnestly and fervently with "the spirit and understanding;" continually, with all manner of "prayer and supplication;" to "make our requests known to God," so as not to take care ourselves about our present concerns; to "pour out our hearts to God;" to cry, "Abba, Father," by the Spirit, and the like. And thus I do not understand how these things are suited to any kind of prayer except that which is from the ability which men have received for the entire discharge of that duty. For there are evidently intimated in these precepts and directions, such varied situational workings of our minds and spirits, such actings of gracious affections, that they will not comply with a constant use of a prescribed form of words.

4. When we speak of men's *own ability in* this matter, we include the conscientious, diligent use of all means which God has appointed for the communication of this ability to them, or to help them in the due use, exercise, and improvement of it. There are such means, and they are to attend to such, as —

(1.) The diligent *searching of our own hearts*, in their frames, dispositions, inclinations, and actings, that we may in some measure be acquainted with their state and condition towards God. Indeed, the heart of man is absolutely unsearchable for any but God himself — that is, as to a

complete and perfect knowledge of it. Hence David prays that God would "search and try him," and lead and conduct him by his grace according to what he found in him, and not leave him wholly to act or be moved according to his own apprehensions of himself, Psa 139.23-24. Yet where we sincerely inquire into them by the help of that spiritual light which we have received, we may discern so much of them as to guide us rightly in this and all other duties. If this is neglected, if men live in the dark for themselves, or satisfy themselves only with an acquaintance with those things which an accusing conscience will not allow them to be utterly ignorant of, they will never know how to pray, or what to pray for, in a due manner. The lack of a due discharge of this duty is a cause of that barrenness in prayer which is found among most, as we observed. We should be continually exercised in it, especially on account of that unspeakable variety of spiritual changes which we are subject to. The one who would abound in all manner of that supplication which is enjoined of us, who would have his prayers be proper, useful, and fervent, must be diligent in the search and consideration of his own heart, with all its dispositions and inclinations, and the secret guilt which it variously contracts.

(2.) Constant, *diligent reading of the Scriptures* is another duty that this ability greatly depends on. From the precepts of God in them, we may learn our own wants; and from his promises, we may learn the relief he has provided for them. These things, as it has been shown, supply us with the matter of prayer. Moreover, from there we learn what words and expressions are fit and proper to be used in our accesses to God. No words or expressions, in themselves or in their meaning, are fit or acceptable in this, except as they are analogous to those in the Scripture, which are of

God's own teaching and direction. And where men are very conversant in the word, they will always be ready for and furnished with fit expressions of their desires to God. This is one means by which they may come to be so; other helps of a like nature might be insisted on.

5. In this spiritual ability *use* is made of the *natural abilities* of invention, memory, and elocution. Why should men not use in the service and worship of God, what God has given them, that they may be able to serve and worship him? Indeed, it sets off the use and excellence of this spiritual gift, that in the exercise of it we use and act our natural endowments and abilities, *as spiritualized by grace*. If it is set up in competition with it, this cannot be done. The more the soul is engaged in its faculties and powers, the more intent it is, in and to the duty.

Nor do I deny that this gift may be varied in degrees and diverse circumstances according to these abilities, even though it has a being of its own, distinct from them. Even in extraordinary gifts, as in receiving and imparting immediate revelations from God, there was variety in outward modes and circumstances. It followed the diversity and variety of the natural abilities and qualifications of those who were employed in that work. This difference may appear much more in the exercise of ordinary gifts, which do not so absolutely influence and regulate the faculties of the mind as the other does.

And we find this difference by experience among those who are endowed with this spiritual ability. All men who have the gift of prayer, do not pray alike as to the *matter* of their prayers, nor as to the *manner* of their praying. But some greatly excel others — some in one thing, some in another. And in part, this proceeds from that difference between them in their natural abilities of invention, judgment, memory, and elocution — especially as

these are improved by exercise in this duty. Yet this is not absolutely so, nor does the difference in this matter depend solely on this, as we observe in constant experience.

For if it did, then those who receive this spiritual ability, and who excel others in these natural endowments, would also constantly excel them in the exercise of the gift itself. This is not so, as all who have observed anything in this matter will know. But the exercise of these abilities in prayer depends on the special assistance of the Spirit of God. For the most part, the gift, like the scion [5] that is ingrafted or inoculated, [6] turns the nature of those abilities into itself, and modifies them according to its own efficacy and virtue, and is not itself changed by them. Evidently, what makes any such difference in the discharge of this duty — such as that in which the edification of others is concerned — is the frequent conscientious exercise of the gift received. Without this, whatever stock of natural abilities it may be planted into, it will neither thrive nor flourish.

6. *Spiritual gifts* are of two sorts:

(1.) Those which are *distinct from* all other abilities, having their whole foundation, nature, and power in themselves. Such were the extraordinary gifts of miracles, healing, tongues, and the like. These were entire in themselves, not built upon or adjoined to any other gifts or graces whatsoever.

(2.) Those which were *adjuncts of*, or annexed to, any other gifts or graces, without which they could have neither place nor use. For example, the gift of utterance [7] depends on wisdom and knowledge. For utterance without knowledge, or anything that does not express sound knowledge for the benefit of others, is folly and babbling.

The gift of prayer is of this latter sort, under our present consideration with respect to the interest of words in that duty. And we affirm that this is a unique gift of the Holy Ghost, and will now further prove it to be so; for —

(1.) It is an inseparable adjunct of that work of the Spirit which we have described. It is from him as its author; for the one who is the author of anything, as to its being, is the author of all its inseparable adjuncts. It has been proved that the work of enabling us to pray is the work of the Spirit; and it is an immeasurable boldness for anyone to deny it, and yet pretend to be a Christian. And he is not the author of any *one part* of this work, but of the *whole*, all that by which we cry, "Abba, Father." The expression of the desires of our souls, in words suited to the acting of our own graces and the edification of others, inseparably belongs to prayer. When we are commanded to pray, if our necessity, condition, and edification, along with the advantage and benefit to others, requires the use of *words* in prayer, then we are to pray with words. For instance, when a minister is commanded to pray in the church or congregation, so as to go before the flock in the discharge of that duty, he is to use words in prayer. Yet even in such cases, we are not required to pray other than as the Spirit is promised to enable us to pray, and as we do, that we may still be said to "pray in the Holy Ghost." Therefore, praying falls under the command and promise, *and* it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

And the nature of the thing itself — that is, the duty of prayer — manifests it. For all that the Spirit of God works in our hearts, with respect to this duty, is in order for us to express it; for what he does, is to enable us to pray. And if he does not give that expression, then all that he does besides may be lost as to its principal end and use. Indeed, all that he does in us where this is lacking, or that he does in fixed meditation, which in some

particular cases is equivalent to this, does not rise beyond that frame which David expresses by keeping silence. He declares an estate of trouble by this, in which he was not yet freely brought to deal with God about it, as he later did by prayer; and he found relief in this.

What can be objected to this with any pretense of reason, is this: not only a part, but the whole duty of prayer, as we are commanded to pray, is an effect in us of the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplication — i.e., the *grace* of prayer and the *gift* of prayer, as some distinguish them, are inseparable. The objection consists in two unsound consequents which, it is supposed, will ensue from this; such as —

(1.) "That everyone who has the *grace of prayer*, as it is called, or in whom the Holy Spirit works the gracious disposition described before, also has the *gift of prayer*, seeing that these things are inseparable." And,

(2.) "That everyone who has the *gift of prayer*, or who has an *ability to pray* vocally for the edification of others, also has the *grace of prayer*, or the actings of saving grace in prayer," which is the thing intended. But these things, it will be said, are manifestly otherwise, and contrary to all experience.

Ans. 1. For the first of these inferences, I grant that it follows from the premises, and therefore I affirm that it is most true, under the ensuing limitations:

1*st*. We are not speaking of what is called the *grace of prayer* in its *habit* or principle, but in its actual exercise. In the first respect, *grace* exists in all who are sanctified, even in those infants who are sanctified from the womb. It does not follow from this, that they must also have the *gift* of prayer, which respects grace only in its *exercise*. And thus our meaning is that all those in whom the Spirit of God graciously acts faith, love, delight, and

desire, by way of *prayer* to God, have an ability from Him to express themselves in vocal prayer.

2*dly*. It is required for this, that such persons be found *in a way of duty* [to pray]; and so they are fit to receive the influential assistance of the Holy Spirit in it. Whoever would use or have the benefit of any spiritual gift must himself, in a way of duty, stir up by constant and frequent exercise, the ability in which that gift consists:

"Stir up the gift of God which is in you," 2Tim 1.6. And where this duty is neglected — for which an account must be given — it is no wonder if any who may have, as they say, the "grace of prayer," yet do not have the gift or faculty to express their minds and desires in prayer by words of their own. Some think there is no such ability in anyone. And therefore they never look for it in themselves, and despise whatever they hear said to that purpose. What assistance such persons may have in their prayers from the Spirit of grace, I do not know; but it is not likely they would have much of his aid or help in doing what they despise him for. Some are so accustomed to and so deceived by pretended helps in prayer — such as making use of or reading prayers composed for them by others — that they never attempt to pray for themselves. But they always think they *cannot* do that which, indeed, they *will not* do. It is as if a child, being raised among none but impotent persons who go about on crutches, were to refuse to try his own strength, and resolves to make use of crutches also. But by good instruction, or some sudden surprise with fear, removing his prejudice, he would cast away this needless help, and make use of his strength. Some gracious persons brought up where forms of prayer are in general use, may have a spiritual ability of their own to pray. But they neither know it, nor ever try it, because of complying with the principles of their education — indeed,

they think it is impossible for them to pray otherwise. But when instruction frees them from this prejudice, or some sudden surprise with fear or affliction forces them to enter into an exercise of their own ability in this kind, their *former* aids and helps will quickly grow into disuse with them.

3*dly*. The *ability* which we ascribe to all who have the gracious assistance of the Spirit in prayer is not absolute, but is suited to their occasions, conditions, duties, callings, and the like. We do not say that everyone who has received the Spirit of grace and supplication must necessarily have a gift enabling him to pray as becomes a minister in the congregation, or any person on a like solemn occasion — nor yet may he be enabled to pray in a family, or in the company of many, if he is not called to this in his condition of life. But everyone has this ability according to his necessity, condition of life, and calling. One who is only a private person has it; and one who is the ruler of the family has it, and he that is a minister of the congregation has it also. And as God enlarges men's occasions and calls, so he will enlarge their abilities, provided they do their duty to that end and purpose. For the slothful, the negligent, the fearful, those who are under the power of prejudices, will have no share in this mercy.

This, therefore, is the sum of what we affirm in this particular: Every adult person who has received and is able to exercise grace in prayer, or any saving grace — without which prayer itself is an abomination — if he does not neglect the improvement of the spiritual aids communicated to him, so far partakes of this gift of the Holy Spirit as to enable him to pray according as his own occasions and duty require. The one who wants mercy for the pardon of sin, or supplies of grace for the sanctification of his person, and the like, if he is sensible of his wants, and has gracious desires for their supply to be worked in his heart, will be enabled to ask them of God in an

acceptable manner, if he is not woefully and sinfully lacking in himself and his own duty.

Ans. 2. As to the second inference, namely, that if this *ability is inseparable from the gracious assistance of the Spirit of prayer, then whoever has this gift and ability, has that gracious assistance in the exercise of it,* or he has received the Spirit of grace, and he has saving graces acted in him, I answer —

1*st*. This does not follow from what we have asserted. For although wherever the *grace* of prayer is, there also is the *gift* in its measure, it does not follow that where the *gift* is, there also must be the grace; for the gift is for the grace's sake, and not the contrary. Grace cannot be acted without the gift, but the gift may be acted without the grace.

2*dly*. We will assent that this gift does grow in another soil, and it does not have its root in itself. It follows on and arises from one distinct part of the work of the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of supplication, from which it is inseparable. And this is his work on the mind: in acquainting it with the things that are to be prayed for, which he does both in the inward convictions of men's own souls, and in the declaration made of this in the Scripture. Now, in some this may be only a common work of illumination, which the gift of vocal prayer may flow from and accompany, when the Spirit of grace and supplication works no further in them. Therefore, it is acknowledged that men in whom the Spirit of grace never resided or savingly operated, may have the gift of utterance in prayer to their own and others' edification. For they have the gift of illumination, which is its foundation, and from which it is inseparable. Where this spiritual illumination is not granted in some measure, no abilities, no industry, can attain the gift of vocal prayer unto edification. For spiritual light is the

matter of all spiritual gifts, which in all their variety are but the various exercise of it. And to suppose that a man has a gift of prayer *without* it, is to suppose that he has a gift to pray for he knows not what — we abhor such real or pretended enthusiasm. Thus, wherever this gift of illumination and conviction is, there is such a foundation of the gift of prayer, that it is not ordinarily absent in some measure, where due use and exercise are observed.

Add to what has been said, that the duty of prayer ordinarily is not complete unless it is expressed in words. It is called "pleading with God," "filling our mouths with arguments," "crying to him," and "causing him to hear our voice." These things are so expressed, not that they are in any way needful to God, but to us. And because it may be said that all this may be done in prayer by internal meditation, where no use is made of the voice or of words, as it is said of Hannah that "she spoke in her heart, but her voice was not heard," 1Sam 1.13, I grant that in some cases it may be so. This is where the circumstances of the duty do not require it to be otherwise, or where the vehemence of affections, which causes men to cry out and roar, will permit it to be so. That being said, in this prayer by meditation, the things and matter of prayer are to be formed in the mind into that sense and those sentences which may be *expressed*; and the mind can conceive no more in this way of prayer than it can express. So it is said of Hannah, when she prayed in her heart, and as she said herself, "out of the abundance of her meditation," verse 16, that "her lips moved," though "her voice was not heard;" she not only framed the sense of her supplications into petitions, but she tacitly expressed them to herself. Obligating anyone to prescribed forms, is as destructive of prayer by inward meditation, as it is of prayer that is conceived and expressed. For it takes away the liberty, and it

prevents the ability, of framing in the mind those petitions or other parts of prayer, according to the sense which the person praying has of them. Therefore, if this expression of prayer in words necessarily belongs to the duty itself, then it is an effect of the Holy Spirit, or else he is not the Spirit of supplication to us.

(2.) *Utterance* is a particular gift of the Holy Ghost as mentioned in 1Cor 1.5; 2Cor 8.7; Eph 6.19; Col 4.3. There are two parts, or two duties, to be discharged by virtue of this gift:

[1.] An ability to speak to men in the name of God in the preaching of the word;

[2.] An ability to speak to God for ourselves, or in the name of and on behalf of others.

There is the same reason for utterance in both these duties; and in each of them it is equally a particular gift of the Spirit of God. See 1Cor 1.5; 2Cor 8.7; Eph 6.19; Col 4.3. [8] The word used in these places is *logos*, "speech," which is well rendered "utterance," — that is, an ability and liberty to speak out the things we have conceived: Eph 6.19 — "Utterance in opening the mouth with boldness," or rather freedom of speech. In sacred things, in praying and preaching, this is the gift of the Holy Spirit. And as such we are enjoined to pray for it, that it may be given to us or others, as the edification of the church requires.

Although this gift may be despised by some, the whole edification of the church depends on it; indeed, the foundation of the church was laid in it, as it was an extraordinary gift, Acts 2.4; and its superstructure is carried on by it — for it is the sole means of public or solemn intercourse between God and the church. It is so if there is such a thing as the Holy Ghost, and if

there are such things as spiritual gifts. The matter of them is *spiritual light*; and the manner of their exercise is *utterance*.

This gift or ability, as it is with all others of like nature, may be considered either as to the *habit* of it, or as to the external *exercise* of it. Those who have received the habit of it, have experienced great variety in its exercise; yet it does not usually appear in natural and moral habits, even where the same preparations precede it. For just as the Spirit of grace is free, and acts arbitrarily with respect to the persons to whom he communicates the gift himself — for "he divides to every man as he wills" 1Cor 12.11 — so he also acts as he *pleases* in the exercise of those gifts and graces which he bestows. Hence believers sometimes find a greater evidence of his gracious working in them in prayer (or evidence of his assistance in praying), and also enlargement in utterance, than at other times. For in both these, he breathes and acts as he pleases. These things are not their own, nor absolutely in their own power. The habitual grace they received will not enable them to pray graciously, nor will their gift of utterance enable them for edification, without the Spirit's actual excitation of that grace, and his assistance in the exercise of that gift. Both conceiving, and uttering our desires in an acceptable manner, are from him; and so are all spiritual enlargements in this duty. The vocal prayer of which we speak, whether private or public, is the uttering of our desires and requests to God, called "making our requests known to him," Phi 4.6. This utterance is a gift of the Holy Ghost; so too is prayer, as to the manner of its performance by words, in supplication. If anyone says he *cannot* thus pray suitably to his own occasions, he only says that he is a stranger to this gift of the Holy Ghost; and if anyone *will not* thus pray, then it is despised by him. If these

things are denied by any because they do not understand them, we cannot help it.

(3.) *It is the Holy Spirit that enables men to discharge and perform every duty that is required of them in a due manner; so that without the Spirit's enabling, we can do nothing as we should.* As this has been sufficiently confirmed in other discourses on this subject, we will not always contend with those by whom such fundamental principles of Christianity are denied or called into question. The Spirit enables men with respect to all sorts of duties, whether those required of us by virtue of a special office and calling, or on the more general account of a holy conduct according to the will of God. Vocal prayer is a duty under both these considerations; for —

[1.] It is the duty of the *ministers* of the gospel by virtue of special office. "Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks," are to be made in the assemblies of the church, 1Tim 2.1. In this, it is the office and duty of ministers to go before the congregation, and to be as the mouth of the church to God. The nature of the office, and the due discharge of it, with what is necessary to the religious worship of public assemblies, manifest that it is so. The apostles, as their example, "gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," Acts 6.4. It is therefore the gift of the Holy Ghost by which these are enabled to do so; for of themselves they are not able to do anything. This is one of those "good gifts" which are "from above, and come down from the Father of lights," Jas 1.17. And they receive these gifts "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph 4.12. Therefore, utterance in praying and preaching, is the gift of the Holy Ghost with respect to their office. And that is such a gift, that those who are utterly destitute of it cannot discharge their office for the edification of the church.

Let men pretend what they please, if a spiritual ability in praying and preaching does not belong necessarily to the office of the ministry, then no man can tell what *does* belong to it, or what the office signifies in the church. For no other ordinance can be administered without the word and prayer, nor can any part of rule itself be administered in a due manner. To deny that these are gifts of the Holy Ghost, is to deny the continuance of his dispensation to and in the church. This would at once overthrow the whole truth of the gospel, and the sole foundation that the ministry of the gospel is built upon.

[2.] The same may be said with respect to duties to be performed by virtue of our *general vocation*.[9] Such are the duties of parents and masters of families. I do not know how far any have gone in ways of profaneness, but I hope none are carried to such a length as to deny it is their duty to pray *with* their families as well as *for* them. Families that do not call on the name of the Lord, are under his curse. And if this is their duty, then its performance must be by the aid of the Spirit of God, by virtue of the general rule we proceed upon.

(4.) *The benefit, profit, advantage, and edification of particular persons, and of families, but especially of the church in its assemblies, in and by the use and exercise of this gift, are such and so great, that it is impious not to ascribe it to the operation of the Holy Spirit*.

Men are not of themselves, without His special aid, authors or causers of the principal spiritual benefit and advantage which the church receives in the world. If they are so, or may be so, then what need is there of the Spirit or his work for the preservation and edification of the church? But we plead the experience of all who desire to walk before God in sincerity, that it has this blessed effect and fruit; and we leave the determination of the question

to the judgment of God himself. Nor will we at present refuse in our plea, a consideration of the different conditions (as to a holy way of life) between those who constantly in their life and at their death, give this testimony, and those by whom this testimony is opposed and denied. None of us are to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor of any effect of His grace. It must therefore be said that the experience which believers of all sorts have of the spiritual benefit and advantage of this ability, both in themselves and others, is not to be moved or shaken by the cavils or reproaches of those who dare to profess that they are strangers to it.

(5.) The *event of things* may be pleaded in evidence of the same truth. For if the ability of praying were not a gift of Him who divides to every one according to his own will,[1Cor 12.11] then there would not be such a difference as there is, openly and visibly in the world, as to the sharing of that gift among all those who pretend to faith in the same truth. And if it were a matter purely of men's natural abilities, then it would be impossible that so many, whose highest concern is to be interested in it, should be such strangers to it, so unacquainted with it, and so unable for it. They say, indeed, "It is but the mere improvement of natural abilities, with confidence and exercise." Let it be supposed for once that some of them at least have confidence that is competent for such a work; let them test what success mere exercise will furnish them with. In the meantime, I will deny that the ability of the prayer that is addressed here, is attainable by any, without that illumination of the mind which is a unique gift of the Holy Ghost. It will be a hard thing to persuade persons of any ordinary consideration, that the difference which they discover between men, as to this gift and ability, proceeds merely from the difference in their natural and acquired abilities,

in which (as it is strenuously pretended) the advantage is commonly on that side which is most defective in them.

Some, perhaps, may say that they know there is nothing in this faculty but the exercise of natural endowments, with boldness and elocution; and that is because they themselves were expert in it, and found nothing else. On that ground, they have left it for what is better.

But for evident reasons, we will not be bound to stand by the testimony of those men, even though they will not be pleaded here. In the meantime, we know that "whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him." Mat 13.12 It is no wonder if persons endowed sometimes with a gift of prayer proportionate to their light and illumination, improving neither the one nor the other as they should, have lost both their light and gift also.

And thus, suitable to my design and purpose, I have given a delineation of the work of the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of grace and supplication, promised to and bestowed on all believers, enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father."

1. This does not exclude silent prayer from being biblical, but it must be articulated in words, not vague thoughts. **1Sam 1:13** "Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk." Owen addresses Hannah's prayer on . This vocal requirement may be tied to , where Owen opposes "mental prayer." – WHG
2. *Cavilling*: raising trivial objections to something; quibbling.
3. *Quaint*: while it can mean old-fashioned, it can also mean out of place or incongruous.
4. In Maimonides' enumeration, there are 613 commandments; 248 positive commandments to perform an act (*mitzvot aseh*), and 365 negative commandments, to abstain from an act (*mitzvot lo taaseh*). The positive number is ascribed to the number of bones and main organs in the human body (Babylonian Talmud, *Makkot* 23b-24a).
5. *Scion*: a shoot or sprout of a plant cut for grafting (Rom 11.17).
6. *Inoculate*: to insert a bud for propagation.
7. **Eph 6:19** that **utterance** may be **given** to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel;
8. **1Cor 1:5** that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge; **2Cor 8:7** But as you abound in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us-- *see* that you abound in this grace also. **Eph 6:19** that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel; **Col 4:3** meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ;
9. *Vocation*: our calling.

Chapter IX. Duties inferred from the preceding discourse.

The result of all our inquiries is how we may improve these duties for obedience in the life of God; for "if we know them, happy are we if we do them," [1] and not otherwise. And our practice in this may be reduced to these two heads:

1. A due and constant *returning of glory to God* on account of his grace in that *free gift of his*, whose nature we have inquired into.

2. A constant *attendance* to the duty for which we are graciously enabled by this gift.

And —

1. A due and constant returning of glory to God:

(1.) We ought to continually bless God and give glory to him for this great *privilege* of the *Spirit of grace and supplication* granted to the church. [2] This is the principal means on their part of all holy intercourse with God, and of giving glory to him. The world is destitute of this fruit of divine bounty. How it gropes in the dark and wanders after vain imaginations, while it does not know how to manage its convictions, nor at all how to deal

with God about its concerns! That world which cannot receive the Spirit of grace and truth, can never have anything to do with God in a due manner. There are those by whom this gift of God is despised, reviled, and blasphemed; and under the shades of many pretenses, they hide themselves from the light in doing so. But they do not know what they do, nor by what spirit they are moved. It is our duty to pray that God would pour out his Spirit even on them also, which will quickly cause them to "look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." Zec 12.10

It appears in two ways, how great a mercy it is to enjoy and improve [3] this privilege:

[1.] In that both the psalmist and the prophet pray directly, in a spirit of prophecy, and without limitation, that God would "pour out his fury on the families that do not call on his name," Psa 79.6; Jer 10.25. And,

[2.] In that the whole work of faith in obedience is designated from this duty of prayer; thus it is said that "whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved," Rom 10.13 — for invocation or prayer, in the power of the Spirit of grace and supplication, is an infallible evidence and fruit of saving faith and obedience. And therefore, the promise of salvation is so eminently annexed to it; or by a *synecdoche*, it is used for the whole worship of God and obedience of faith. It would be endless to declare the benefits that the church of God and everyone who belongs to it, has by prayer. No heart can conceive of that treasury of mercies which lies in this one privilege: in having the liberty and ability to approach God at all times, according to his mind and will. This is the relief, the refuge, the weapons, and the assured refreshment of the church in all conditions.

(2.) It is a matter of praise and glory to God, in a special manner, that he has granted an *amplification* of this privilege under the gospel. The Spirit is

now poured forth from above, and enlarged in his dispensation, both intensively and extensively. Those on whom he is bestowed, receive him in a larger measure than they did formerly under the Old Testament. From there comes that liberty and boldness in their access to the throne of grace, and their crying "Abba, Father," which the apostle reckons among the great privileges of the dispensation of the Spirit of Christ, which those of old were not partakers of. If the difference between the Old Testament state and the New lay only in the outward letter and the rule of it, then it would not be so easily discerned on which side the advantage lay. I think, especially, that it would not be so discerned by those who seem really to prefer the pomp of legal worship, before the plainness and simplicity of the gospel. But the one who understands that it is *not* to "receive the spirit of bondage to fear," but to "receive the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father;" Rom 8.15 and who understands what it means to "serve God in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," Rom 7.6 understands their difference well enough. I cannot help but admire that some make use of arguments, or a pretense of them, for those helps and forms of prayer which do not seem compliant with the work of the Spirit of supplication from the Old Testament, described before, and the practice of the church of the Jews before the time of our Savior; though indeed they can prove nothing from that. For do they not acknowledge that there is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit on the church under the New Testament than under the Old? To deny it is to take away the principal difference between the law and the gospel. And is not the performance of duties to be regulated according to the supplies of *grace*?

Suppose that those people, then being carnal and obliged to observe carnal ordinances in this particular, needed *forms* of prayer — which indeed

they did not (ones that were merely and only formal); nor did they use them that we know of. Does it therefore follow that believers under the New Testament, who unquestionably have a larger portion of the Spirit of grace and supplication poured out on them, would either need them, or be obliged to them? It is in vain to pretend there was a different dispensation of the Spirit to them than to us, where different fruits and effects are not acknowledged. The one who has been under the power of the law, and has been set free by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, knows the difference; and he will be thankful for the grace that is in it.

Again; the privilege of the Spirit is extensively enlarged, in that it is now communicated to multitudes, while of old it was confined to a few. Then its dews only watered the land of Canaan and the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh; now its showers are poured down on all nations, even on "all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." [1Cor 1.2] In every assembly of mount Zion throughout the world, called according to the mind of Christ, prayers and supplications are offered to God through the effectual working of the Spirit of grace and supplication (unless he is despised). And this is done in the accomplishment of that great promise, Mal 1.11, "From the rising of the sun even to its going down, my name will be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the heathen, says the Lord of hosts." Prayer and praises in the assemblies of the saints is the pure offering and that sacrifice which God promises will be offered to him. And this oblation is not to be kindled without the eternal fire of the Spirit of grace. No sacrifice was to be offered of old, except with fire taken from the altar. Be that what it may, if it was offered with strange fire,[Lev 10.1] it was an abomination; hence they were all

called *esh*, [4] the "firings" of the Lord. And this was a semblance of the Holy Ghost; which is why Christ is said to "offer himself to God through the eternal Spirit." And so must we offer our prayers. In the fruits and effects of his works, lies all the glory and beauty of our assemblies and worship. Take them away, and they are contemptible, dead, and carnal. And he carries this work into the families of those who believe. Every family separately is enabled to pray and serve God in the spirit; and those which are not, live in darkness all their days. He is the same to believers all over the world, in their closets or in their prisons. Wherever they are, they all have "access by one Spirit to the Father," Eph 2.18. And for this enlargement of grace, God justly expects a revenue of glory from us.

2. A constant *attendance* to the duty for which we are graciously enabled by this gift.

(1.) It is assuredly our duty to *make use* of the gift of the Spirit, as that which is purchased for us by Christ, [5] and is of inestimable advantage to our souls. There are two ways by which men may be guilty of the neglect of this heavenly favor:

[1.] They are guilty of neglect when the gift itself is not valued or sought after, nor endeavored to be attained. And this is done under various pretenses. Some imagine that it is not a gift of the Spirit, and so they despise it. Others think either that it is not attainable by them, or that if it is attained, it will not match the labor and diligence it requires. And therefore they take up with another way and means which they know is easier, and hope is as useful. The whole duty is despised by some; and consequently, all assistance in its performance is also despised. I will speak to none of these at present. But,

[2.] We are guilty of this neglect when we do not constantly and diligently, on all occasions, make use of it for the end to which it is given to us, and indeed, abound in its exercise. Do you have an ability to pray always, freely given to you by the Holy Ghost? Then why do you not pray always, in private, in families, according to all occasions and opportunities administered? What concern prayer has to the glory of God, and in living to him, will be owned by all. It is that single duty alone in which every grace is acted, every sin is opposed, every good thing is obtained, and the whole of our obedience in every instance of it is concerned. It is widely known to those who are in any way exercised in these things, what difficulties lie in the way of its due performance, what discouragements rise up against it, how unable we are of ourselves to discharge it in a due manner, what aversion there is to it in our corrupted nature, and what distractions and weariness are apt to befall us under it. Yet the blessedness of our present and future condition much depends on prayer.

This gift of the Spirit of grace and supplication is given to us by Jesus Christ to relieve us against all these things, to "help our infirmities," to give us freedom, liberty, and confidence in our approaches to the throne of grace, to enable us as children to cry, "Abba, Father," with delight and contentment. Who can express how great a folly and sin it is not to be found in the constant exercise of prayer? Can we, by any means, more "grieve this Holy Spirit" and damage our own souls? God having given us the Spirit of grace and supplication, will we be remiss, careless, and negligent in prayer? Is this not the worst way by which we may "quench the Spirit," which we are so cautioned against?

Can we go from day to day in the neglect of opportunities, occasions, and just times of prayer? How will we answer for the contempt of this gracious

aid offered to us by Jesus Christ? Do others go from day to day in neglect of this duty in their closets and families? Do not blame them, or at least they are not worthy of as much blame as we are: for they do not know how to pray; and they have no ability for it. But for those to walk in neglect of this, who have received this gift of the Holy Ghost enabling them for it, and making it easy for them and pleasant to the inner man, how great an aggravation it is of their sin!

Will others, at the tinkling of a bell, rise and run to prayers to be said or sung [6] — prayers in which they can have no spiritual interest, doing it only to pacify their consciences, and to comply with the prejudices of their education — and yet will we be found in neglect of that spiritual aid which is graciously afforded to us? How will the blind devotion and superstition of multitudes, with their diligence and pains in this, rise up in judgment against such negligent persons? We may see in the Papacy how, upon ringing a bell, or lifting up any ensign of superstition, some of them will rise at midnight; others in their houses, indeed, in the streets, fall on their knees to their devotions. Having lost the conduct of the Spirit of God, and his gracious guidance for performing this duty in its proper seasons, they have invented ways of their own to keep up a frequency in this duty, in their manner, to which they are true and punctual. And will those who have received that Spirit which the world cannot receive, be treacherous and disobedient to his motions, or to what he constantly inclines and enables them to do? Besides all other disadvantages which accrue to our souls by it, who can express the horrible ingratitude of such a sin? I press it all the more, as to all sorts of prayer — in private, in families, in assemblies for that end — because the temptations and dangers of the days in which we live, particularly and eminently call for it. If we would talk less and pray

more about them, things would be better than they are in the world; or at least we would be better enabled to bear them, and undergo our portion in them with more satisfaction. To be negligent in this, at such a time as this, is a sad token of a [false] security that foreruns destruction.

(2.) Have any received this gift of the Holy Ghost? — let them know that it is their duty *to cherish it, to stir it up and improve it*. It is freely bestowed, but it is to be preserved carefully. It is a gospel talent given to be traded with, and thereby to be increased.[Mat 25.14f] There are various degrees and measures of this gift in those who receive it. But whatever measure anyone has, from the greatest to the least, he is obliged to cherish, preserve, and improve it. We do not assert such a gift of prayer that would render our diligence in it unnecessary, or render the exercise of our natural abilities useless.

Indeed, the end of this gift is to enable us to diligently exercise the faculties of our souls in prayer in a due manner. And therefore, as it is our duty to use it, so it is our duty to improve it. It is one reason against the restraint of forms, because there is too little exercise of the faculties of our minds in the worship of God in them. Therefore, this being our duty, it may be inquired by what way or means we may stir up this grace and gift of God, so that if we do not thrive much in the outward part of it (through any weakness or infirmity of mind), at least we do not decay in or lose what we have received. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are the fire that kindles all our sacrifices to God. Now, although of old that fire on the altar first came down from heaven, or it "came forth from the Lord," Lev 9.24, once it was placed there, it was always to be kept alive with care and diligence. For otherwise it would have been extinguished like any other fire, Lev 6.12-13. Hence the apostle warns Timothy, 2Tim 1.6, to excite and "quicken the fire

of his gift," by blowing off the ashes and adding fuel to it. Now, there are many things that are useful and helpful to this end; such as —

[1.] A constant *consideration and observation of ourselves*, our own hearts, with our spiritual state and condition. The matters of our requests or petitions in prayer are to be taken from there, Psa 16.7. [7], Our state in general, because of the depths and deceitfulness of our hearts, with our darkness in spiritual things, is such that it will find us matter for continual search and examination all the days of our lives, as it is expressed in those prayers in Psa 19.12, 139.23-24. [8] And so we are subject to various changes and alterations in our spiritual frames and actings every day, and also to temptations of all sorts. As our occasions and necessities require, we are to deal with God about these things in our supplications, Phi 4.6. [9] How will we be ready for this, and prepared with the proper matter of prayer, if we neglect a constant and diligent observation of ourselves in it, or of the state of our own souls? This being the food of the gift, where it is neglected, the gift itself will decay. If men consider only a *form* of things in a course of action, they will quickly come to a form of *words*. [10]

To assist us in this search and examination of ourselves, to give light into our state and wants, to make us sensible of this, is part of the work of the Spirit *as* a Spirit of grace and supplication. And if we neglect our duty towards him in this, how can we expect him to continue his aid to us, as to the outward part of the duty? Therefore, let a man speak in prayer with the tongues of men and angels, to the highest satisfaction, and maybe the good edification of others; yet if he is negligent, if he is not wise and watchful in this duty of considering the state, actings, and temptations of his own soul, he has but a perishing, decaying, outside and shell of this gift of the Spirit.

And those by whom this self-search and judgment is attended to, will ordinarily thrive in the power and life of this duty. By this means, we may know the beginnings and entrances of temptation; the deceitful actings of indwelling sin; the risings of particular corruptions, with the occasions that yield them advantages and power; the supplies of grace which we daily receive, and the ways of deliverance. Just as the one who prays without a due consideration of these things, prays at random, "fighting uncertainly as one beating the air," 1Cor 9.26 so the one whose heart is filled with a sense of them, will always have in readiness the due matter of prayer; and he will be able to fill his mouth with pleas and arguments by which the gift itself will be cherished and strengthened.

[2.] *Constant searching of the Scripture* to the same purpose is another subservient duty to this duty of prayer itself. That is the mirror in which we may take the best view of ourselves, because it at once represents both what we *are*, and what we *ought* to be; what we are in ourselves, and what we are by the grace of God; what our frames, actions, and ways are, and what their defect is in the sight of God. A higher instruction as to what to pray for, or how to pray, cannot be given to us, Psa 19.7-9. [11] Some imagine that to "search the Scriptures," to take forms of speech or expressions from there, that are accommodated to all the parts of prayer, and to set them in order, or retain them in memory, is a great help to prayer. Whatever that is, it is *not* what I intend at present. It is most true that if a man is "mighty in the Scriptures," singularly conversant and exercised in them, abounding in their senses and expressions, and has the help of a faithful memory with it, it may greatly further and assist him in the exercise of this gift for the edification of others. But I do not know what use this collection of phrases, speeches, and expressions is, where perhaps the mind is barren in the *sense*

of the Scripture. What I press for, is a diligent search into the Scriptures as to the things revealed in them — for in doing that, our wants in all their circumstances and consequents, are revealed and represented to us; and so are the supplies of grace and mercy which God has provided for us. The wants are revealed with authority, to make us sensible of them; and the supplies are revealed with that evidence of grace and faithfulness which will encourage us to make our requests for them. The word is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit reveals our wants to us, when we do not know what to ask for; and so he enables us to make intercessions according to the mind of God, Rom 8.26-27. [12] Indeed, who is it that, almost any time reading the Scripture with a due reverence for God, and a subjection of his conscience to Him, does not have some particular matter of prayer or praise effectively suggested to him?

Christians would find no small advantage, on many accounts that are not to be insisted on here, if they would frequently, if not constantly, turn what they read, into a prayer or praise to God. By doing this, the instructions to faith and obedience would be further confirmed in their minds, and their hearts would be more engaged in their practice. We have an example of this in Psalm 119, in which all considerations of God's will and our duty are turned into petitions.

[3.] A due *meditation on God's glorious excellencies* greatly tends to the cherishing of this gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no example we have of prayer in the Scripture, that the entrance into prayer does not consist in expressions of His name, and most commonly, of some of the glorious titles of God, to which is usually added the remembrance of some mighty acts of his power. The nature of the thing requires that it should be so; for besides God having revealed his name to us for this very purpose —

that we might call upon him by the name which he owns and takes to himself [13] — it is necessary that we should, by some external description, determine our minds toward the One to whom we make our addresses, seeing that we cannot conceive any image or idea of him in this. [14] Now, the end of this is twofold:

1*st*. To ingenerate in us that reverence and godly fear which is required of all who draw near to this infinitely holy God, Lev 10.3; Heb 12.28. [15] The most signal encouragement to boldness in prayer, and having access to God thereby, is in Heb 10.19-22, with Heb 4.16. [16] We may go into the holy place with boldness, and to the throne of grace. And it is upon a throne of grace that God in Christ is represented to us; yet it is still a throne on which majesty and glory reside, and God is always to be considered as being on a throne.

2*dly*. Faith and confidence are excited and acted toward a due frame by this; for prayer is taking ourselves to God as our shield, our rock, and our reward, Pro 18.10. [17] Therefore, a due and previous consideration of those holy properties of his nature is necessary, which may encourage us to do so, and assure us in our doing so. Because this is so great a part of prayer, and the great foundation of supplication and praise, frequent meditation on these holy excellencies of the divine nature is a necessary and excellent preparation for the whole duty. It fills the heart with a sense of those things which the mouth is to express, making those graces ready for their exercise, which is required in this.

[4.] Meditation on the *mediation and intercession of Christ*, for our encouragement, has the same importance and tendency. To this end, spiritually, he is proposed to us as abiding in the discharge of his priestly office, Heb 4.15-16, 10.19-22. [18]

This is not only an encouragement to our supplications, and in them, but a means to increase and strengthen the grace and gift of prayer itself. For the mind is thereby made ready to exercise itself about the effectual interposition of the Lord Christ at the throne of grace on our behalf, which has a principal place and consideration in the prayers of all believers. And hereby, principally, we may test our faith as to what race and kind it is, whether it is truly evangelical or not. Some say that the eagle tests the eyes of her young ones by turning them to the sun; if they cannot look steadily on it, she rejects them as spurious. We may truly test our faith by immediate intuitions of the Sun of Righteousness. Direct faith to act immediately and directly on the incarnation of Christ and his mediation; and if it is not of the right kind and race, then it will turn its eye aside to anything else. It can bear a fixed consideration of God's essential properties, his precepts and promises; but it cannot fix itself on the person and mediation of Christ with steadiness and satisfaction. There is, indeed, much profession of Christ in the world, but little faith in him.

[5.] *Frequency in exercise* is the immediate way and means of the increase and improvement of this gift. All spiritual gifts are bestowed on men to be employed and exercised; for "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone to profit with," 1Cor 12.7. God requires that his talents be traded with Mat 25.14f (that his gifts be employed and exercised); and he will also call us to account for the discharge of the trust committed to us in them. See 1Pet 4.10-11. [19] Therefore, the exercise of this and like gifts tends to their improvement on a double account:

1*st*. Because they reside in the mind in the manner and nature of a habit or a faculty, it is natural that they would be increased and strengthened by exercise, as all habits are by multiplying acts proceeding from them. So also

by disuse [20] they will weaken and decay, and in the issue, they will be utterly lost and perish. So it is with many as to the gift of prayer. They were known to receive it in some good measure of usefulness, for their own edification and that of others. But upon neglecting the use and exercise of it in public and private — which seldom goes alone, without some secret or open enormities [21] — they have lost all their ability, and cannot open their mouths on any occasion in prayer, beyond what is prescribed to them or composed for them. But the just hand of God is also in this matter, depriving them of what they had, for their abominable neglect of his grace and bounty in this.[Mat 13.12]

2*dly*. The increase will be added to, by virtue of God's blessing on his own appointment; for having bestowed these gifts for that end, where persons are faithful in the discharge of the trust committed to them, he will graciously add to what they have. This is the eternal law concerning the dispensation of evangelical gifts, "To everyone that has, more will be given, and he will have abundance: but from him that does not have, even what he has will be taken away," Mat 25.29.

It is not the mere having or not having that is intended, but using or not using what we have received, as is plain in the context. Now, I do not say that a man may or ought to exercise himself in prayer merely with this design that he may preserve and improve his gift. In some cases, it may indeed be lawful for a man to consider it, but not only this. For example, a master of a family may have someone in his family who is able to discharge that duty and can attend to it. Yet he will find it his wisdom not to omit his own performance of it, unless he is content that his gift, as to its use to his family, *should* wither and decay. But all that I plead is this: that the one who conscientiously, with respect to all the ends of prayer, abounds in the

exercise of this gift, will assuredly thrive and grow in it, or at least he will preserve it in response to the measure of the gift of Christ. For I do not propose these things as though every man in the diligent use of them may constantly grow and thrive in that part of the gift which consists in utterance and expression. For there is a "measure of the gift of Christ" assigned to everyone, whose bounds he will not pass, Eph 4.7. But in these paths and ways, the gift which they have received will be preserved, kept thrifty and flourishing. And from the least beginnings of a participation in it, they will be carried on to their own proper measure, which is sufficient for them.

[6.] *Constant fervency and intension of mind and spirit* in this duty, works directly towards the same end. Men may multiply prayers as to the outward work in them, and yet not have the least spiritual advantage by them. If they are dull, dead, and slothful in them, if these are done under the power of habit and formality, what result can they expect? Fervency and intension of mind quickens and enlarges the faculties, and leaves vigorous impressions on them of the things addressed in our supplications. The whole soul is cast into the mould of the matter of our prayers, and it is thereby prepared and made ready for continual fresh spiritual engagements about them. And this fervency that we intend, does not consist in the vehemence or loudness of words, but in the intension of the mind. For the earnestness or vehemence of the voice is allowable only in two cases:

1*st*. When the edification of the congregation requires it, which being numerous, they cannot hear what is spoken unless a man lifts up his voice;

2*dly*. When the vehemence of affections will bear no restraint, Psa 22.1, Heb 5.7. [22]

Now, just as all these are means by which the gift of prayer may be cherished, preserved, and improved, so all of them are the ways by which

grace acts itself in prayer. And therefore, they have an equal respect to the whole work of the Spirit of supplication in us.

(3.) It is our duty to use *this gift of prayer for the ends to which it is freely bestowed on* us. And it is given —

[1.] With respect to those who receive it; and,

[2.] With respect to the benefit and advantage of others.

[1.] With respect to those who receive it, its end is (and it is a blessed means and help) to stir up, excite, quicken, and act all those graces of the Spirit by which they have communion with God in this duty. Such are faith, love, delight, joy, and the like; for,

1*st*. Under the conduct of this gift, the mind and soul are led to the consideration of, and are fixed upon, the proper objects of those graces, with the due occasions of their exercise. When men are bound to a form, they can act grace only by the things that are expressed in that form. Whatever any may apprehend from it is strait and narrow, compared with the extent of that divine intercourse with God which is needful for believers in this duty. But in the exercise of this *gift*, there is no concern of faith, or love, or delight, that will not be presented to them, and they are excited to a due exercise about them. Therefore, it is to be used to this end: — namely, as a means to stir up and act those graces and holy affections, in whose working and exercise the life and efficacy of prayer consists.

2*dly*. The exercise of the gift itself should be nothing but the way of those graces acting themselves towards God in this duty. For words are supplied only to clothe and express gracious desires; and when they wholly exceed them, they are of no advantage. Yet, just as by virtue of the gift, the mind is able to comprehend and manage the things about which those graces and gracious desires are to be exercised, so in the use of expressions they are

quickened and engaged in this. For when a man has heard of a miserable object, he is moved with compassion towards it; but when he comes to behold it "his own eye affects his heart," as the prophet says in Lam. 3.51. By beholding it, his compassion is actually moved and increased. So too, although a man may have a comprehension in his mind about the things of prayer, and he is affected with them, his own words will also affect his heart; and by reflection, they will stir up and inflame spiritual affections. So too, even in private, many find advantage in the use of their own gift, beyond what they can attain in mere mental prayer; which must be addressed afterward. Again,

[2.] This gift respects others, and it is to be used to that end. For just as it is appointed by God to be exercised in societies, families, church assemblies, and on occasion for the good of any, so it is designed for their edification and profit. For there is an ability in it to express the wants, desires, and prayers of others also. And as this discharge of the duty is particularly incumbent on ministers of the gospel, and also on masters of families and others, as they are called to it on occasion, so they are to attend to a fourfold direction in it:

1*st*. To their own *experience*. If such persons are believers themselves, they have experienced in their own souls, all the general concerns of those who are in the same condition. As sin works in one, so it works in another; as grace is effectual in one, so it is effectual in another; as he that prays, longs for mercy and grace, so do those who join with him. His hatred of sin, his love for Christ, his laboring after holiness and conformity to the will of God, are of the same kind as those in other believers also. Hence, persons "praying in the Spirit" according to their own experience, are often supposed by everyone in the congregation to be praying over their

condition, rather than their own. And so it will be while the same corruption in kind, and the same grace in kind, with the same kind of operations, are in them all. But this does not extend itself to particular sins and temptations, which are left to everyone to deal with between God and their own souls.

2*dly*. To *Scripture light*. This is what lively expresses the spiritual state and condition of all sorts of persons — namely, both those who are unregenerate, and those who are converted to God. Whatever that light expresses concerning either sort, may safely be pleaded with God in their behalf; and abundant matter for prayer may be taken from this for all occasions. May it be especially so, and in a particular manner, from that holy summary of the church's desires to God that are given to us in the Lord's Prayer. All we can duly apprehend, spiritually understand, and draw out of that mine and heavenly treasury of prayer, may be safely used in the name and on behalf of the whole church of God. But without understanding the things intended, the use of the words will not profit.

3*dly*. To an *observation of their ways and walking*, with whatever overt discovery they make of their condition and temptations. The one who is constantly the mouth of others to God, is not to pray at random, as though all persons and conditions were alike to him. No one prays for others constantly, by virtue of special duty, that he is not also called to watch over them and observe their ways. In doing so, he may know something of their state which may be a great direction to his supplications with them and for them. Indeed, without this, no man can ever rightly discharge this duty in behalf of others, such that they may find their particular concerns in it. And if a minister is obliged to consider the ways, light, knowledge, and walking of his flock, in his preaching to them — so that what he teaches may be suited to their edification — he is no less bound to the same consideration

in his prayers *with* them and *for* them, if he intends to pray to their use and profit. The same may be said of others in their capacity. I may not insist on here, the wisdom and caution which are to be used in this.

4*thly*. To the *account which others receive from them concerning their wants*, their state and condition. In some cases, persons are obliged to give this account to those whose duty it is to help them by their prayers, Jas 5.16. [23] If this duty were more attended to, the minds of many might receive inconceivable relief by it.

(4.) Let us take heed —

[1.] That this gift is not *solitary* or alone; and,

[2.] That it is not *solitarily acted* at any time.

[1.] When it is solitary — that is, where the gift of prayer is in the *mind*, but no grace to exercise in prayer is in the *heart* — it is at best but a part of that form of godliness which men may have, and yet deny its power.[2Tim 3.5] It is therefore consistent with all sorts of secret lusts and abominations. It would be easy to demonstrate that whatever advantage others may have by this gift in those who are destitute of saving grace, yet they themselves are worsted by it in many ways. For from this they are lifted up with spiritual pride, which is the ordinary consequence of all unsanctified light. And by this, they countenance themselves against the reflections of their consciences on the guilt of other sins, thus resting and pleasing themselves in their own performances. But to the best observation I have been able to make, of all spiritual gifts which may be communicated for a time to unsanctified minds, this one soonest decays and withers. Whether God takes it away from them judicially, or they are not able to bear the exercise of it because it is diametrically opposite to the lusts in which they indulge themselves, for the most part it quickly and visibly decays. This is

especially so where, because of open sins and apostasy, its continuance in them might be a matter of danger or scandal for others.

[2.] Let it not be acted solitarily. Persons in whom there is a principle of spiritual life and grace, who are endowed with those graces of the Spirit which ought to be acted in all our supplications, may yet, even in the use and exercise of this gift, neglect to stir them up and act them. There is no greater evidence of a weak, sickly, spiritual constitution, than to often be surprised into this miscarriage. Now, this is so when men in their prayers engage only their light, invention, memory, and elocution, without special actings of faith and delight in God. The one who watches his soul and its actings may easily discern when he is sinfully negligent in this matter, or when outward circumstances and occasions have made him attend more to the *gift* than to the *grace* in prayer — for this, he will be humbled.

And these few things I thought fit to add concerning the due use and improvement of this gift of the Spirit of God.

1. **Joh 13:14-17** "If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. [15] "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. [16] "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. [17] "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

2. Τίς οὐκ ἂν ἐκπλαγείη καὶ θαυμάσειε τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπίαν, ἣν εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐπιδείκνυται, τοσαύτην τιμὴν ἀνθρώποις χαριζομενος, ὡς καὶ προσευχῆς ἀξιῶσαι καὶ ὁμιλίας τῆς νεοφύτου! Θεῷ γὰρ ἀληθῶς λαλοῦμεν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς προσευχῆς. — Chrys. *Hom. lxvii. de Prec. 1*.

3. *Improve*: use or employ to good purpose; turn to a profitable account.

4. אִשִּׁים (plural, "the firings").

5.Ὥσπερ τῷ σώματι φῶς ἥλιος, οὕτω ψυχῇ προσευχή· εἰ οὖν τυφλῷ ζημία τὸ μὴ ὁρᾷν τὸν ἥλιον, ποία ζημία Χριστιανῷ τὸ μὴ προσεύχεσθαι συνεχῶς καὶ διὰ τῆς προσευχῆς τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ φῶς εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν εἰσάγειν; — Chrys. *Hom. lxvii. de Prec.*

6. The Roman Catholic practice of "Sanctus Bells," which are rung as part of the celebration of the Mass. *Missal ch.4, par 150*.

7. **Psa 16:7** I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.

8. **Psa 19:12** Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*.
Psa 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; [24] And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

9. **Phi 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
10. That is, the words will become an incantation, no longer affecting either the mind or the heart in a transformative way. – WHG
11. **Psa 19:7** The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; [8] The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
12. **Rom 8:26** Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. [27] Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.
13. 1Chr 16.8; Psa 80.18; 99.6; 105.1; 116.13; Rom 10.13.
14. Exo 20.4; **Joh 4:24** "God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
15. **Lev 10:3** And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace. **Heb 12:28** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.
16. **Heb 10:19** Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, [20] by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, [21] and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, [22] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,

having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **Heb 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

17. **Pro 18:10** The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.

18. **Heb 4:15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. [16] Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

19. **1Pet 4:10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. [11] If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

20. Originally, *desuetude*: a state of inactivity or disuse.

21. *Enormity*: an act of extreme wickedness.

22. **Psa 22:1** My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so* far from helping Me, *And from* the words of My groaning? **Heb 5:7** who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear;

23. **Jas 5:16** Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Chapter X. Of mental prayer as pretended to by some in the Church of Rome.

Having described or given an account of the *gift of prayer*, and the use of it in the church of God, and the nature of the work of the Spirit in this, it will be necessary to consider briefly what some have set up in competition with it, as a more excellent way in this part of divine worship. In the first place, *mental prayer*, as described by some devout persons of the church of Rome, is preferred above it. They call it "pure spiritual prayer, or a quiet repose of contemplation; that which excludes all images of the fancy, and in time, all perceptible actuations of the understanding; and it is exercised in signal elevations of the will, without any force at all, yet with admirable efficacy." And to dispose a soul for such prayer, there is previously required "an entire calmness and even death of the passions, a perfect purity in the spiritual affections of the will, and an entire abstraction from all created things." — Cressy, *Church Hist. pref. par. 42, 43*.

1. The truth is, I am fixed in a dislike of that mere outside, formal course of reading or singing prayers which is in use in the Roman church. Though in Mr. Cressy's esteem, it has a show of a very civil conduct with God, it is

indeed accompanied with the highest contempt for God's infinite purity and all divine excellencies. And I so much more abhor that *magical incantation* which many among them use, in the repetition of words which they do not understand, or of applying what they repeat to an end other than what the words signify. It is saying so many prayers for such an end, or for such purpose, of which there may be not one word of mention in the prayers themselves. And thus I must approve of any search for a *real internal intercourse of soul* with God in this duty. But men must be careful of two things in this:

(1.) That they do not assert what they can *fancy*, but what indeed, in some measure, they have an *experience* of. It is always dangerous for men to conjecture about what others experience (for they can do no more), and from there, to form rules or examples of duty; and it may be pernicious to those who follow such instructions. And in this, Mr. Cressy fails. He gives nothing but his own fancies of others' pretended experience.

(2.) That what they pretend to have an experience of, is confirmable by Scripture rule or example. For if it is not, then we are directed to the conduct of all extravagant imaginations in everyone who pretends to a spiritual experience.

Attend to these two rules, and I will grant in prayer all the ways by which the soul, or its faculties, can rationally act itself towards God in a holy and spiritual manner.

But if you extend it to the kind of actings that our nature is not capable of, at least not in this world, it is the open fruit of a deceived fancy, and it makes all that is tendered from the same hand, to be justly suspect. And such is that instance of this mental prayer: *it is in the will and its affections without any actings of the mind or understanding*. For I grant that the

adhesion of the will and affections to God, by love, delight, contentment, rest, and satisfaction, in prayer, belongs to the improvement of this duty. And yet, to imagine that they are not guided, directed, or moved by the understanding in the contemplation of God's goodness, beauty, grace and other divine excellencies, is to render our worship and devotion brutish or irrational, where it is, and ought to be, our "*reasonable* service." Rom 12.1

This very description of prayer given here, is a mere effect of fancy and imagination, and not what its author was led to by the conduct of spiritual light and experience. That is evident from this: that it is borrowed from those contemplative philosophers who, after preaching the gospel in the world, endeavored to refine and advance heathenism to comply with it — at least it is fancied in imitation of what they ascribe to a perfect mind. One of them, and his expressions in one place, may suffice for an instance — Plotinus in his *Enneads*. For after many other ascriptions to a soul that has attained union with the highest good, he adds this: —

"A mind thus risen up is in no way moved, no anger, no desire of anything is in it" (a perfect rest of the affections); "no, neither reason nor understanding" (are acted), "nor, if I may say so, itself. But being ecstasied and filled with God, it comes into a quiet, still, immovable repose and state, in no way declining" (by any sensible actings) "from its own essence, nor exercising any reflex act upon itself; it is wholly at rest, as having attained a perfect state;" [1]

— or to this purpose, with much more of the same. And as it is easy to find the substance of our author's notion in these words, so the reader may see it further declared at large in that last chapter of his *Enneads*. And in design, all his companions at about that time speak to the same purpose.

2. The spiritual *intense fixation of the mind*, by contemplation on God in Christ, until the soul is, as it were, swallowed up in admiration and delight. And being brought to an utter loss through the infiniteness of those excellencies which it admires and adores, it returns again into its own abasements, out of a sense of its infinite distance from what it would absolutely and eternally embrace. And with that come the inexpressible rest and satisfaction which the will and affections receive in their approaches to the eternal Fountain of goodness. These are things to be aimed at in prayer, and which are frequently enjoyed through the riches of divine condescension. The soul is hereby raised and ravished, not into ecstasies or unaccountable raptures, not activated into motions above the power of its own understanding and will; but it is filled with rest in all its faculties and affections, through the effectual workings of the Spirit of grace and the lively impressions of divine love, with intimations of the relations and kindness of God — in "joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1Pet 1.8 And these spiritual acts of communion with God, of which I may say with Bernard, *Rara hora, brevis mora*,[2] may be enjoyed in mental or vocal prayer indifferently.

But because the description given here of mental, spiritual prayer has no countenance given to it from the Scriptures — indeed, those things said about it are expressly contrary to it, such as "perfect purity" and the like — and as it cannot be confirmed by the rational experience of anyone, it in no way takes away from the necessity and usefulness of vocal prayer, to which it is opposed. For the use of words is still necessary in this duty, from the nature of the duty itself, the command of God, and the edification of the church.

And it has fallen out unhappily, as to the exaltation of the conceived excellence of this mental prayer, that our Lord Jesus Christ not only instructed his disciples to pray by the use of words, but did so himself, and that was constantly so far as we know, Mat 26.39, 42. [3] Indeed, when he was most intense and engaged in this duty, instead of this pretended *still prayer of contemplation*, he prayed "with a strong outcry," Heb 5.7, [4] which in Psa 22.1 is called the "voice of his roaring." And all the reproaches which this author casts on fervent, earnest, vocal prayer — namely, that it is a tedious, loud, impetuous, and uncivil conduct with God, a mere artificial slight and facility [5] — may with equal truth be cast on the outward manner of the praying of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was often long, and sometimes loud and vehement. And to the example of their Lord and Master, we may add the example of the prophets and apostles, who mention nothing of this pretended elevation, but constantly made use of, and desired God to hear in their supplication, their "*voices*," their "*cry*," their "*words*" — the words of many of them were accordingly recorded. Therefore, words proper, suggested by the Spirit of God, and taken either directly or analogically out of the Scripture, help the mind, and enlarge it with supplications. [6]

The use of such words, being first led to by the desires of the mind, leads the mind on to express its further desires also; and it increases those which are so expressed. It is from God's institution and blessing, that the mind and will of praying lead to the words of prayer, and the words of prayer lead on the mind and will, enlarging them in their desires and supplications. Without this aid, many would often be restrained in acting their thoughts and affections towards God, or be distracted in them, or diverted from them. We have experienced that an obedient, sanctified persistence in the use of

gracious words in prayer, has prevailed against violent temptations and injections of Satan, which the mind in its silent contemplations was not able to grapple with. And holy affections are thus also excited by it. The very words and expressions which the mind chooses to declare its thoughts, conceptions, and desires about heavenly things, reflect upon the affections, increasing and exciting them. Not only do the things themselves that are fixed on affect the heart, but the words of wisdom and the sobriety by which they are expressed also affect it. There is a recoiling of efficacy, if I may say so, in deep impressions on the affections, from the words by which those affections are expressed. But we address prayer principally as it is to be performed in families, societies, assemblies, and congregations, where this mental prayer would do as well to promote edification, as that which is attainable in the silent meetings of the Quakers.

And because this kind of "prayer," as it is called, is not only recommended to us, but preferred before all other ways and methods of prayer, and chosen as an instance to highlight the devotion of the church of Rome, and to invite others to it, I will inquire into it a little more particularly. And I must say that, on the best view or examination I can take of it, it seems to be a matter that is altogether useless, uncertain, an effect of the vain curiosity which it entertains, and by which men "intrude themselves into those things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up by their own fleshly mind." Col 2.18 For (not to go over what was intimated before about practical things in religion) no man can understand anything which he cannot experience. And so nothing is rejected by virtue of this rule, which some men have no experience of through their own default; but everything is justly rejected which no man can attain any experience of in the discharge of his duty. If any such things belonged to

our condition in this world, and someone speaks of them to others, he must be a barbarian to them in what he says. [7] And because he speaks of that in which his own reason and understanding have no interest, he must also be a barbarian to himself.

For no man can understand by the use of reason, however advanced by spiritual light, such actings of the souls of other men, or of his own soul, where there is no exercise of reason or understanding, as these raptures are pretended to consist in. Thus one of them says, "The ground of my soul, touches the ground of the essence of God." [8] It would certainly have been better for him to keep his apprehensions or fancy to himself, than to express himself in words which, in their own proper sense, are blasphemous, and whose best defense is that they are unintelligible. And even if it is not unlawful, it is doubtless inexpedient for anyone, in things of religion, to utter what it is impossible for anybody else to understand, with this plea alone: that indeed, they do not understand it themselves, for it is what they enjoyed without any acts or actings of their own understanding. To allow such pretenses is the ready way to introduce Babel into the church, and to expose religion to scorn. I have known some among us, pretending to such raptures; for a while they stirred up the admiration of weak and credulous persons. But through a little observation of what they did, spoke, and pretended to, with an examination of it all by the unerring rule, they quickly came into contempt.

All I intend at present is that, whatever is in this pretense, it is altogether useless for edification; and therefore its declaration ought to have no regard in the church of God. If the apostle would not allow the use of words, though miraculously suggested to those who used them, without an immediate interpretation of their meaning, [9] then what would he have said

of such words and things that are capable of no interpretation, such that any man living could understand them? For those who so extol and commend these to us at present, discuss them at random, [10] as blind men talk of colors — for they do not pretend to have any experience of these things themselves. It is somewhat an uncouth way of proceeding, to enhance the value of the communion of their church, and to invite others to it, by declaring that there are some among them who enjoyed such spiritual ecstasies which could not be understood either by themselves or any others. For nothing can be understood where there is no exercise of reason or understanding. Therefore, the old question, *cui bono*? [11] will discharge this pretense from being of any value or esteem in religion with considerate men.

Again, the whole of this kind of prayer is useless as to the benefit and edification of the church or any member of it. So it is impossible for there to ever be any certainty about the raptures in which it is pretended to consist. Rather, they must everlastingly be the subject of contention and dispute. For who will assure me that the persons pretending to these duties or enjoyments are *not* mere pretenders?

Any man that lives, if he has a mind for it, may say such things, or use such expressions concerning himself. If a man, indeed, pretends and declares that he does or enjoys those things which are expressed in the word of God as being the duty or privilege of *anyone* — and upon that, they are acknowledged by all to be things that are true and real in themselves, and likewise attainable by other believers — then he is ordinarily, so far as I know, to be believed in his profession (unless he can be convicted of falsehood by anything inconsistent with such duties or enjoyments). Nor do I know of any great evil in our credulity in this, if we happen to be deceived

in or by the person professing it; because he speaks of no more than what all acknowledge as their duty to endeavor after. But when anyone pretends to spiritual actings or enjoyments which are neither prescribed nor promised in the Scripture, nor are investigable in the light of reason, no man is obliged to give credit to this upon his mere profession. Nor can any man tell what evil effects or consequences his doing so may produce. For once men are taken away from that sure ground of Scripture and their own understandings, putting themselves afloat on the uncertain waters of fancies or conjectures, they do not know how they may be tossed, nor where they may be driven.

If it is said that the holiness and honesty of the persons by whom these special privileges are enjoyed are sufficient reason why we should believe them in what they profess, I answer that they would be holy and honest in good measure, if they did not pretend to things that are repugnant to reason and unwarranted by the Scripture — this is sufficient to crush the reputation of any man's integrity. Nor can their holiness and honesty be proved to be such that it renders them absolutely impregnable against all temptations; that was the pre-eminence of Christ alone. Nor is there any more strength in this plea than what may be reduced to this assertion: that there are not nor were there ever any hypocrites in the world who are undiscoverable to the eyes of men. For if there may be such, then some of these pretenders may be of their number, notwithstanding the appearance of their holiness and honesty. Besides, if the holiness of the best of them were to be examined by evangelical light and rule, perhaps it would be so far from being a sufficient countenance for other things, that it would not be able to defend its own reputation. Nor is it lack of charity which makes men doubtful and unbelieving in such cases; but it is godly jealousy and Christian prudence,

which require them to take care that they not be deceived or deluded. These not only warrant that they stay on their guard, but make it their necessary duty also. For it is not a new thing, that pretenses of raptures, ecstasies, revelations, and unaccountable, extraordinary enjoyments of God, should be made use of for corrupt ends — indeed, abused to the worst ends imaginable.

The experience of the church, both under the Old Testament and the New, witnesses to this, as the apostle Peter declares in 2Pet 2.1. [12] For among those of old, there were multitudes of those who falsely pretended to have visions, dreams, revelations, and such spiritual ecstasies — some of whom wore a "rough garment to deceive." Zec 13.4 And this was not alone, but it was accompanied with all those apparent austerities that might produce an opinion of sanctity and integrity in them. And when the body of the people had grown corrupt and superstitious, this sort of men had credit with them above the true prophets of God; yet for the most part they showed themselves to be hypocritical liars. We are abundantly warned about such spirits under the New Testament, as we are foretold that many would be deluded by them. We are commanded to test, by the unerring rule of the word, all such pretenders to extraordinary intercourse with God. And we desire only the liberty to do so.

But suppose that those who assert these devotions and enjoyments of God in their own experience, are *not* false pretenders to what they profess; nor do they design to deceive; but they are persuaded in their own minds of the reality of what they endeavor to declare. Yet this will not give us the least security of their truth either. For it is known that there are so many ways, partly natural, partly diabolical, by which the fancies and imaginations of persons may be so possessed with false images and apprehensions of things

— and with so vehement an efficacy as to give them a confidence of their truth and reality — that no assurance of these things can be given by being persuaded of the sincerity of those by whom they are pretended. There are so many ways by which men are disposed to such a frame and actings, or by which they are imposed on by such delusions, especially where they are prompted by superstition, and are encouraged doctrinally to expect such imaginations. Thus it is a far greater wonder that more have not fallen into the same extravagances, than any that have done so. We find by experience that some, by satanic delusions, have had their imaginations so fixed on things that are evil and noxious, that they have confessed to things and crimes that have rendered them liable to capital punishments — things they were never really and actually guilty of. Therefore, seeing that these acts or duties of devotion are pretended to be such that there is no sensible actuation of the mind or understanding in them, and so they cannot rationally be accounted for, or rendered perceptible to the understanding of others — it is not unreasonable to suppose that they are only fantasies of deluded fancies, which superstitious, credulous persons have gradually raised themselves to. Or they are such that these persons exposed themselves to being imposed on by Satan, through a groundless, unwarrantable desire for them, or an expectation of them.

But whatever there may be in the height of this "contemplative prayer," as it is called, it is not prayer; nor on any account can it be esteemed prayer. It was declared before that we allow for mental prayer, and all actings of the mind in holy meditations. Nor do we deny the usefulness or necessity of those other things — of mortifying the affections and passions, of an entire resignation of the whole soul to God, with contentment in him, so far as our nature is capable of these things in this world. But what we inquire into is

that incomparable [13] excellence of prayer in the silence of the soul, and the pure adhesion of the will, without any actings of the understanding. And I say, whatever else there may be in this, it does not have the nature of prayer, nor is it to be esteemed as prayer, even though it is recommended to us under that name and notion. Prayer is a *natural* duty, the notion and understanding of which is common to all mankind; and the concurrent voice of nature does not deceive. Therefore, whatever is not compliant with it, at least what is contradictory to or inconsistent with it, is not to be esteemed prayer.

Now, in the common sense of mankind, this duty is that acting of the mind and soul in which they address their desires to God, with faith and trust; or they ascribe praise and glory to him for what he is in himself, and what he is to them. This is done from an acknowledgment of the sovereign being, self-sufficiency, rule, and dominion of God, with his infinite goodness, wisdom, power, righteousness, omniscience and omnipresence. And it is with a sense of their own universal dependence on God, on his will and pleasure, as to their beings, lives, happiness, and all their concerns, as their state and condition require. This is the general notion of prayer, which the reason of mankind centers in; nor can any man conceive of it under any other notion whatever. The gospel directs the performance of this duty in an acceptable manner with respect to the mediation of Christ, the aids of the Holy Ghost, and the revelation of the spiritual mercies we all desire. But it changes nothing in the general nature of it. It does not introduce a duty of another kind, and call it by the name of that which is known in the light of nature, but which is quite another thing. All men in whom the first innate principles of natural light are not extinguished, or woefully depraved, universally understand this general nature of prayer

well enough. Prayer may be done among some by a long traditional course of an atheistic and brutish conduct. But as large and extensive as the convictions of men are, concerning the being and existence of God, so are their apprehensions of the nature of this duty. For the first actings of nature towards a Divine Being are in *invocation*. Every one of Jonah's mariners knew how to call on his god when they were in a storm.

And where there is no trust or affiance [14] in God acted, by which men glorify him as God, and where desires or praises are not offered to him — neither of which can be done without express acts of the mind or understanding — there is no prayer, whatever else there may be. Therefore, this contemplative devotion — in which it is pretended that the soul is ecstasied, and the will and affections are advanced above all the actings of the mind or understanding — this does not have one property of prayer, as the nature of prayer is manifested in the light of nature and the common agreement of mankind. Prayer without an actual acknowledgment of God in all his holy excellencies, and the actings of faith in fear, love, confidence, and gratitude, is a monster in nature, or a side-effect [15] of imagination, which has no existence *in rerum natura*. [16] These persons, therefore, had best find some other name with which to impose this kind of devotion on our admiration; for it is utterly excluded from the whole precincts of prayer or invocation on the name of God. What place it may have in any other part of the worship of God, we will immediately inquire into.

But this examination of prayer *by the light of nature* will be looked at as most absurd and impertinent. For our measures of all matters of spiritual communion with God will be false and perverse if we must try them by this rule and standard — and that is in those things which wholly depend on divine, supernatural revelation. I say, no doubt they would. Therefore, we

call only that concern about it to a trial hereby, whose true notion is confessedly fixed in the light of nature. Without extending that line beyond its due bounds, we may take by it a just measure of what prayer is and is not; for in this it cannot deceive nor be deceived. And this is all we engage in at present. In the pursuit of the same inquiry, we may also bring it to the Scripture, from which we will find that such mental prayer is as foreign to it, as it is from the light of nature. For as it is described, so far as anything intelligible may be collected from that, it exceeds or deviates from whatever is said in the Scripture concerning prayer. This is true even in those places where the grace and privileges of prayer are most emphatically expressed, and as it is exemplified in the prayers of the Lord Christ himself, and of all the saints recorded in it.

Therefore, the light of nature and the Scripture, by common consent, exclude it from being prayer of any kind. Prayer, in the Scripture's representation of it, is the soul's access and approach to God by Jesus Christ, through the aids of his Holy Spirit, to make known its requests to him, with supplication and thanksgiving. And that on which it is recommended to us, are its external adjuncts, and its internal grace and efficacy. Of the first sort (external adjuncts), the principal ones are earnestness, fervency, importunity, constancy, and perseverance. No man can attend to these, or any of them, in a way of duty, except in the exercise of his mind and understanding. Without this, whatever looks like any of them, is brutish fury or obstinacy.

And as to the internal form of it (grace and efficacy), in that description which is given of its nature in the Scripture, it consists in the special exercise of faith, love, delight, fear, and all the graces of the Spirit, as occasion requires. And in that exercise of these graces, in which the life and

being of prayer consists, a continual regard is to be had to the mediation of Christ and the free promises of God. Through these means, he exhibits himself to us as a God who hears prayer. These things are both plainly and frequently mentioned in the Scripture, as all of them are exemplified in the prayers of those holy persons which are recorded in it. But for this *contemplative* prayer, as it is described by our author and others, there is neither precept for it, nor direction about it, nor motive for it, nor example of it, in the whole of Scripture. It must seem marvellous, to some at least, that although this duty and all its concerns are more insisted on in Scripture than any other Christian duty or privilege whatever, that in the height and excellency of contemplative prayer (in comparison to all other kinds of prayer), all the actings of the mind and soul are decried — and yet this has not obtained the least intimation in Scripture.

For if we were to take a view of all the particular places in which the nature and excellence of this duty are described, and the grace and privilege with which it is accompanied — for instance, in Eph 6.18, Phi 4.6, Heb 4.16, 10.19-22 [17] — there is nothing that is consistent with this contemplative prayer. Neither is there anything in the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor of his apostles, nor of any holy men from the beginning of the world, either for themselves or the whole church, that gives the least countenance to it. Nor can any man declare what is or can be the work of the Holy Spirit in this, *as* he is a Spirit of grace and supplication; nor is any gift of his, mentioned in the Scripture, capable of the least exercise in it. So in no sense can this be that act of "praying in the Holy Ghost" which is prescribed for us. There is therefore no example proposed for our imitation, no mark set before us, nor any direction given, for attaining this pretended excellence and perfection. Whatever is fancied or spoken concerning it, is

utterly foreign to the Scripture, and it must owe itself to the deluded imagination of a few persons.

Besides, the Scripture does not propose to us any other kind of access to God under the New Testament, nor any nearer approaches to him than what we have in and through the mediation of Christ, and by faith in him. But in this pretense, what is aimed at seems to be such an immediate enjoyment of God in his essence, that it is regardless of Christ, and it leaves him quite behind.

But God will not be "all in all" immediately to the church, until the Lord Christ has fully delivered the mediatory kingdom to him.[1Cor 15.28] And, indeed, the silence concerning Christ in the whole of what is ascribed to this contemplative prayer, or rather the exclusion of him from any concern in it as mediator, is sufficient with all considerate persons to evince that it does not have the least interest in the duty of prayer, whether name or thing.

Nor does this imagination belong any more to any other part or exercise of faith in this world; and yet here we universally walk by faith, and not by sight. The whole of what belongs to it may be reduced to these two heads: what we do towards God, and what we enjoy of Him in this. As to the first, all the actings of our souls towards God belong to our "reasonable service," Rom 12.1; more is not required of us in a way of duty. But that in which our minds and understandings have no concern, is no part of our reasonable service; nor is it any part of our enjoyment of God in this life. For no such thing is promised to us anywhere; and it is by the promises alone that we are made partakers of the divine nature, or have anything from God communicated to us. Therefore, there seems to be nothing in the bravery [18] of these affected expressions, than an endeavor to fancy something above the measure of all possible attainments in this life, and yet falling

unspeakably beneath those of future glory. It is therefore a kind of purgatory in devotion — something that is out of this world and yet not in another; it is above the earth and beneath heaven, where we may leave it in clouds and darkness.

1. Plotinus, *Ennead*. 6, lib. 9, cap. 10; Οὐ γάρ τι ἐκινεῖτο παρ' αὑτῷ, οὐ θυμὸς, οὐκ ἐπιθυμία ἄλλου παρῆν αὑτῷ, ἀναβεβηκότι· ἀλλ' οὐ δὲ λόγος, οὐ δέ τις νὸησις· οὐ δ' ὅλως αὑτὸς, εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἁρπασθεὶς ἢ ἐνθουσιάσας ἡσυχῇ ἐν ἐρήμῳ καταστάσει γεγένηται ἀτρεμεῖ, τῇ αὑτοῦ οὐσίᾳ οὐδαμοῦ ἀποκλίνων, οὐδὲ περὶ αὑτὸν στρεφόμενος, ἐστὼς πάντη καὶ οἷον στάσις γενὸμενος.·– *The Six Enneads* by Plotinus (204-270) neo-Platonist philosopher; written 250 A.D.

2. "How rare the time, and how brief the stay." Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153).

3. His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

4. μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς [NT:3326,2906,2478] – *meta krauges ischuros*.

5. *Artificial slight and facility* (facile): Artfully speaking, but lacking in substance or significance.

6. "Interdum voce nos ipsos ad devotionem et acrius incitamus," August. Epist. cxxi. ad Probam. "Sometimes the sound of our own voice incites devotion and sharpness."

7. **1Cor 14:11** Therefore if I do not know the meaning of the voice, I shall be a barbarian to him that speaks, and he that speaks *shall be* a barbarian to me.

8. "Fundus animæ meæ tangit fundum essentiæ Dei." Such mystical non-sense continues today. Paul Tillich, for example, said that God is not *the ground of all being* (Hindu), but *the ground of Being itself*, as if that were any clearer. “God does not exist. He is being-itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore, to argue that God exists is to deny him.” Owen says such a man "declares as the word of God, the dreams of his own fancy, or

the divinations of his own mind." . Indeed, such fanciful conceptions tend to contradict Scripture: Heb 11.6, "whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists."– WHG

9. **1Cor 14:26-28** Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. [27] If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. [28] But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

10. *At random*: rashly or impetuously; being undefined, unknown, or unimportant to them.

11. "Which good?" or "What good is it?"

12. **2Pet 2:1** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

13. *Incomparable* here means that comparison is impossible; it cannot be compared either with Scripture, or others' experience.

14. *Affiance*: faith.

15. Originally, *by-blow*.

16. "In the nature of things."

17. **Eph 6:18** praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; **Phi 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; **Heb 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. **Heb 10:19** Therefore,

brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, [20] by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, [21] and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, [22] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

18. *Bravery* here connotes audacity, or brazenness, not courage. – WHG

Chapter XI. Spiritual ability in prayer, in opposition to prescribed forms of prayer

There are also great pleas for the use of *prescribed, limited forms of prayer*, in opposition to that spiritual ability in prayer which we have described and proved to be a gift of the Holy Ghost. Where these forms are contended for by men with respect to *their own use and practice only*, as suitable to their experience, and judged by them as serving God with the best that they have, I will not take the least notice of them, nor of any dissent about them. But because a persuasion not only of their lawfulness but of their *necessity* is made use of for other ends and purposes, in which the peace and edification of believers are highly concerned, it is necessary that we should make some inquiry into this. I say, it is only with respect to such a sense of their *nature*, and the *necessity* of their use, that gives occasion or a supposed advantage for men to oppose, deny, and speak evil of that way of prayer, with its causes and ends, which we described, that I will in any way consider these *forms of prayer* and their use.

For I know well enough that I have nothing to do with judging or condemning the persons or duties of men in such acts of religious worship

as they choose for their best, and hope for acceptance in, unless they are expressly idolatrous. For unless it is in such cases or the like, which are plain either in the light of nature or Scripture revelation, it is a silly apprehension, and tending to atheism, that God does not require all men to regulate their actings towards him according to that sovereign light which he has erected in their own minds.

What the *forms* intended are, how they are composed, how they are used, and how in some cases they are *imposed*, are things so well known to all, that we will not need to speak to them. *Prayer is God's institution*; and the reading of these *forms* is what men have made and set up in the likeness of this institution,[Exo 20.4] or in compliance with it. For it is said that "the Lord Christ having provided the *matter of prayer*, and having commanded us to pray, it is left to us or others to *compose prayer*, as to the manner of it, as we or they see cause." But there is no appearance of truth in the inference; rather, the direct contrary ensues from the proposition laid down. It is built on the supposition that, besides the provision of the matter of prayer, and the command of the duty to pray, the Lord Christ has not further promised, and he does not communicate to his church, those spiritual aids and assistances that will enable them to pray according to the mind of God, without any other outward pretended helps. We must not admit this if we intend to be Christians. In like manner, he has provided the whole subject-matter of preaching, and commanded all his ministers to preach. But it does not follow from this that all or any of them may make one sermon, which is to be constantly read in all assemblies of Christians, without any variation — that is, unless we also grant that he ceases to give gifts to men for the work of the ministry. Our inquiry will therefore be, what place or use *forms*

may have in this, or in our duty as performed by virtue of this. It may be expressed in the ensuing observations:

1. The Holy Ghost as a Spirit of grace and supplication, is nowhere, that I know of, promised to any to help or assist them in *composing prayers* for others. And therefore we have no ground to *pray for Him* or his assistance to that end in particular, nor any foundation on which to build faith or expectation of receiving him for that. Therefore, He is not concerned in that work or endeavor in any special or gracious manner. Whether this is a duty that falls under his care as communicating gifts in general for the edification of the church, will be examined afterward.

What we plead at present is that he is nowhere particularly promised for that end; nor do we have either command or direction to ask for his assistance in it. If anyone says that he is promised to this purpose *as* a Spirit of grace and supplication, I answer that he is promised directly to those who are to pray, and not to those who make prayers for others — they themselves say this is not praying. This is besides what has already been pleaded at large in the explication and vindication of the proper sense of that promise. But supposing it is a duty in general to compose prayers for our own use or for the use of others, it is lawful and warrantable to pray for the aid and guidance of the Holy Ghost in this — but that is not as to his particular assistance in prayer; and it is not as he is a Spirit of supplication to believers. Rather, it is as he is our sanctifier, the author and efficient cause of every gracious work and duty in us.

It may be that the prayers composed by some holy men for the use of the church under the Old Testament, by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, will also be pretended. But because the inspiration or assistance which they had in their work was of quite another kind than anything that is

ordinarily promised, or that any persons can now pretend to, it may yet be further inquired into, whether they were dictated to them by the Holy Ghost to be used afterward by others as mere forms of prayer.

The great plea for some of these external aids of prayer, is utterly removed out of the way by this one consideration. It is said that "some of these prayers were prepared by great and holy men; it may be that some of them were martyrs for the truth of the gospel and testimony of Jesus." And indeed, if any men in the world had a promise of special assistance by the Spirit of God in such a work, I would not contend that the persons referred to were not as likely to partake of that assistance as any others in these latter ages. But they did *not* have extraordinary, supernatural inspiration. And the holy apostles, who were always under the influence and conduct of the Spirit, never made use of it for any such purpose as to prescribe forms of prayer, either for the whole church or for single persons. Therefore, because there is no such special promise given to any, this work of composing prayers is foreign to the duty of prayer, as to any interest in the gracious assistance which is promised for it — however much it may be a common duty, and fall under the help and blessing of God in general. Thus some men may set down and express a prayer — that is, the matter and outward form of it — that declares the substance of things to be prayed for. This is done from their acquaintance with the matter of prayer, which is above others. And they attain this by spiritual light, knowledge, and experience, and their comprehension of the arguments which the Scripture directs are to be used and pleaded in our supplications.

Their [composed] prayer may much more accommodate the conditions, wants, and desires of Christians, than the compositions of others who are not so clearly enlightened as they are, and who have not had the experience

which they have had. As for those "prayers," as they are called, which men without such light and experience compose, of phrases and expressions gathered from others, taken out of the Scripture, or invented by themselves, they are cast into a contexture and method which they suppose is suited to prayer in general. However well-worded these are, however quaint and elegant in expression — they are so empty and jejune, [1] that they can be of no manner of use to anyone, except to keep them from praying while they live. We have a good store of such books, filled with them, easy enough to be composed by those who never in their lives prayed according to the mind of God. Much may be learned from the former enlightened sort, as they doctrinally exhibit the matter and arguments of prayer. But the composition of prayers for *others*, to be used as *their* prayers, is what no man has any promise of particular spiritual assistance in, with respect to prayer in particular.

2. No man has any *promise of the Spirit* of grace and supplication to enable him to *compose a form or forms of prayer for himself*. The Spirit of God helps us *to pray*, not to *make prayers* in that sense. As before, suppose in doing so, that men may have His assistance in general as they do in other studies and endeavors; they still do not have that special assistance which he gives as a Spirit of grace and supplication, enabling us to cry, "Abba, Father." For men do not compose forms of prayer, however they may use them, by the immediate actings of faith, love, and delight in God, with the other graces which he excites and acts in those supplications, according to the divine will. Nor is God the immediate object of the actings of the faculties of the souls of men in such a work. Their inventions, memories, and judgments, are immediately exercised about their present composition; and there they rest. The exercise of grace immediately on God in Christ,

under the formal notion of prayer, is not a part of men's work or design when they compose and set down forms of prayer for themselves or others. Therefore, if any do so, they are not under a promise of special assistance in this, in the manner declared before.

3. As there is no assistance promised for the composition of such forms, it is not an *institution* of the law or gospel. Prayer itself *is* a duty of the *law of nature*. And being of such singular and indispensable use to all persons, the commands for it are reiterated in the Scripture beyond those concerning any other particular duty whatever. And if it has respect to Jesus Christ, with various ordinances of the gospel that are to be performed in his name, it falls under a *new* divine institution.

On this, commands are given to us to pray, to pray continually without ceasing, to pray and not faint, to pray for ourselves, to pray for one another, in our closets, in our families, in the assemblies of the church. But as for this work of making or composing forms of prayers for ourselves, to be used as prayers, there is no command, no institution, and no mention in the scriptures of the Old Testament or the New. It is a work of human extract and origin; nor can anything be expected from it except what proceeds from that fountain. There may possibly be a blessing on it, but not one that issues from the special assistance of the Spirit of God in it, nor from any divine appointment or institution whatever. But the reader must observe that I do not urge these things to prove forms of prayer are unlawful to be used. At present I only declare their nature and origin with respect to that work of the Holy Spirit which we have described.

4. This being *the origin* of forms of prayer, the *benefit* and *advantage* of their use, which alone is pleadable in their behalf, comes next under consideration. And this may be done with respect to two sorts of persons:

(1.) Those who have the *gift* or *ability* of *free prayer* bestowed on them, or who have attained it somehow.

(2.) Those who are *mean and lowly in this ability*, and therefore incompetent to perform this duty without the aid and assistance of forms.

And forms are pleaded to be of use and advantage to both sorts.

(1.) It is pleaded that there is so much good and so much advantage in the use of forms, *that it is expedient that those who can otherwise pray for their own and others' edification, should still sometimes use them*. What this benefit is has not been distinctly declared; nor do I know, nor can I divine, what it would consist in. Sacred things are not to be used merely to show our liberty. And there seems to be in this a neglect of stirring up the gift, if not also the grace of God, in those who have received them. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit with." 1Cor 12.7 And so, to forego its exercise on any just occasion does not seem warrantable. We are bound at all times, in the worship of God, to serve him with the best we have. If we have a male in the flock and we sacrifice what, by comparison, is a corrupt thing, then we are deceivers. Free prayer for those who have an ability for it, is more suited to the nature of the duty in the light of nature itself, and to Scripture commands and examples, than to the use of any prescribed forms. Therefore, to omit the exercise of a spiritual ability in this, and to voluntarily divert to the other relief — which, in that case at least, is no relief — does not readily present its advantage to a sober consideration. The reader may observe that at present I do not examine what men or churches may agree upon by common consent, judging and avowing what is best for their own edification (which is a matter for another consideration); but I only examine the duty of believers as such, in their respective stations and conditions.

(2.) It is generally supposed that the use of such forms is of singular advantage to those who are *low and mean*[2] *in their ability to pray of themselves*. I propose it this way, because I cannot grant that anyone who sincerely believes there is a God, who is sensible of his own wants and his absolute dependence on Him, is utterly unable to make requests to Him for relief, without help beyond what is suggested to him by the working of the natural faculties of his own soul. What men wilfully neglect is one thing; and what they cannot do, if they seriously apply themselves to their duty, is another. Nor do I believe there is any man who is so far instructed by the gospel in the knowledge of Christ, that he can make use of a composed prayer with understanding, who is not also able in some measure to call upon God in the name of Christ, with respect to what he feels in himself and is concerned in — and no man's prayers are to be extended further than this.

Therefore, I speak of those who have the least measure and lowest degree of this ability, seeing that none are absolutely uninterested in this. I do not know of what use these forms are to this sort of persons, unless it is to keep them low and mean all the days of their lives. For because in both the state of nature and the state of grace (and every man is in one or the other), there are certain heavenly sparks suited to each condition, the main duty of all men is to stir them up and increase them. Even in the remainders of lapsed nature, there are "celestial fires," [3] in notices of good and evil, in accusations and apologies of conscience. None will deny that they ought to be stirred up and increased; and this cannot be done other than in their sedulous exercise.[4] Nor is there any effectual way to exercise them, but in the soul's applying itself to God with respect to them; and this is done in prayer only. But as for those whom we principally regard in this matter —

that is, professed believers in Jesus Christ — there are none who do not have such principles of spiritual life; and in this, they have principles of all obedience to God and communion with him. Being improved and exercised under those continual supplies of the Spirit which they receive from Christ their head, these will enable them to discharge every duty that is required of them, in every condition or relation, in an acceptable manner. Among these duties is that of an ability for prayer. To deny that they have it, assuming they are true believers, is to expressly contradict the apostle affirming that "because we are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, by which we cry, Abba, Father."

But this ability, as I have shown, is in no way to be improved except by constant exercise. Now, it is not hard to determine whether the use of the forms inquired into, which certainly takes men away from the exercise of whatever ability they have, directly tends to keep them low and mean in their abilities.

"But suppose those spoken of are not yet real believers, but only those who profess the gospel, who have not yet sincerely converted to God, whose duty it also is to pray on all occasions. These have no such principle or ability to improve; and therefore this advantage is not to be neglected by them."

I answer, that the matter of all spiritual gifts is spiritual light. Therefore, according to their measure in the light of the knowledge of the gospel, such is their measure in spiritual gifts also. If they have no spiritual light, no insight into the knowledge of the gospel, then prayers framed and composed according to that light will be of little use to them. If they have any such light, it ought to be improved by exercise in this duty, which is such an indispensable necessity to their souls.

5. Yet the advantage that all sorts of persons may have by this, in having "the *matter of prayer* prepared for them and suggested to them," is also insisted on. "They have much to seek in this who yet have *sincere desires to pray*, and whose *affections* comply with what is proposed to them." And this, indeed, would carry a great appearance of reason with it, except that there are other ways appointed by God to this end. And they are sufficient for it under the guidance, conduct, and assistance of the blessed Spirit, whose work must be admitted in all parts of this duty — unless we intend to frame prayers that will be an abomination to the Lord. Such ways are men's diligent and sedulous consideration of themselves, of their spiritual state and condition, their wants and desires; a diligent consideration of the Scripture, or its doctrine in the ministry of the word. By these they will be both instructed in the whole matter of prayer, and convinced of their own concern in it, with all other helps of coming to the knowledge of God and of themselves — all of which those who intend to pray in a due manner are to attend to.

But to furnish men with prayers to be said by them, seeking to satisfy their consciences while they live in the neglect of these things, is to deceive them and not to help or instruct them. If they will conscientiously attend to these things mentioned, they will have no need of those other pretended helps. For men to live and converse with the world, not once inquiring into their own ways, or reflecting on their own hearts (unless under some charge of conscience, accompanied with fear or danger); never endeavoring to examine, try, or compare their state and condition with the Scripture, nor scarcely considering either their own wants or God's promises; to have a book lie ready for them in which they may read a prayer — and by doing

so, assume they have discharged their duty in that matter — this is a course which surely should not be countenanced or encouraged.

Nor is the perpetual rotation of the same words and expressions suited to instruct or carry men on in the knowledge of anything. Rather, it diverts the mind from the due consideration of the things intended; and therefore it commonly results in formality. Where men have words or expressions prepared for them and suggested to them, that really signify the things in which they are concerned, and yet the light and knowledge of those principles of truth from which they are derived, and into which they are resolved, is not in some measure fixed and abiding in their minds, they cannot be much benefited or edified by their repetition.

6. *Experience* is pleaded in the same case. For me, where persons are evidently conscientious, this is of more moment than a hundred notional arguments that cannot be brought to that trial. Some therefore say that, in the use of such forms, they have had a spiritual advantage, the exercise of grace, and holy intercourse with God; and they have had their affections warmed and their hearts much bettered by it. They take this to be a clear evidence and token that they are not disapproved by God; indeed, that they are a great advantage in prayer, at least for many.

Ans. Whether they are approved or disapproved by God, whether they are lawful or unlawful, we do not consider; but only whether these forms are for spiritual benefit and advantage — whether they are for the good of our own souls and the edification of others, *as* set up in competition with the exercise of the gift described before. And in this, I am very unwilling to oppose the experience of anyone who seems to be under the conduct of the least beam of gospel light; only, I desire to propose a few things for their consideration: such as —

(1.) Whether they rightly understand the difference between *natural devotion* that is occasionally excited, and the due actings of *evangelical faith* and *love*, with other graces of the Spirit, in a way directed to by divine appointment? All men who acknowledge a Deity or Divine Power which they adore, when they seriously address themselves to perform any religious worship to this deity in their own way, be that what it may, they will have their affections moved and excited suitably to the apprehensions they have of what they worship, even though it has no existence except in their own imaginations. For these affections ensue on the general notion of a Divine Power, and not on the application of them to such idols that indeed are nothing in the world. In such persons there will be dread, and reverence, and fear, as there were in some of the heathen, even to an unspeakable horror when they entered into the temples and the merely imaginary presence of their gods; the whole work was begun and finished in their fancies. [5]

And sometimes great joys, satisfactions, and delights, ensue on what they do; for just as what they do is suited to the best light they have, so their consciences find relief in the discharge of their duty. For men are apt to be complacent in their own inventions (as Micah was, Jdg 17.13), [6] and from inveterate prejudices, which are the guides of most men in religion. These things, I say, are found in persons of the highest and most dreadful superstitions in the world, indeed, heightened to inexpressible agitations of mind — in horror on one side, and raptures or ecstasies on the other. And they are all tempered and qualified according to the mode and way of worship in which men are engaged. But in themselves, they are all of the same nature; that is, they are natural, or they are effects and impressions upon nature. So it is with the Mohammedans, who excel in this devotion;

and so it is with idolatrous Christians, who place the excellence and glory of their profession of Christ in this. Therefore, such devotion, such affections, will be excited by religious offices, in all who are sincere in their use, whether they are of divine appointment or not. But the actings of faith and love on God through Christ, according to the gospel, or the tenor of the new covenant, with the effects produced by it in the heart and affections, are things of quite another kind and nature. Unless men know how to really distinguish between these things, it serves no purpose to plead that there is a spiritual benefit and advantage in the use of such forms; for the benefit and advantage is possibly of no other kind than what all false worshippers in the world have, or may experience.

(2.) Let them diligently inquire whether the effects on their hearts, which they plead, proceed from a *precedent preparation*, a good design and upright ends, that are occasionally excited. Let it be supposed that those who make use of and plead for forms of prayer, especially in public, prepare themselves for it in a due manner by holy meditation, with an endeavor to bring their souls into a holy frame of fear, delight, and reverence of God; let it also be supposed that they have a good end and design in the worship which they address themselves to — namely, the glory of God and their own spiritual advantage — the prayers themselves, even though they would be irregular in some things, may give occasion to exercise those acts of grace which these persons were otherwise prepared for. And I say yet further —

(3.) That while these forms of prayer are clothed with the general *notions of prayer* — that is,

- they are esteemed as such in the minds of those who use them;
- they are accompanied in their use with the motives and ends of prayer;

they express no matter that is unlawful to be insisted on in prayer;

they direct the souls of men to none but lawful objects of divine worship and prayer (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit);

men make use of them with the true design of prayer, looking for due assistance in prayer;

— I do not judge that there is any such evil in them that God will not communicate his Spirit to any in their use, such that they would have no holy communion with Him in and under them.

Much less will I say that God never regards their persons in this, or rejects their praying as unlawful. For the persons and duties of men may be accepted with God when they walk and act in sincerity according to their light; even though in many things, and those being of no small importance, various irregularities are found both in *what* they do, and in the *manner* of doing it. Where persons walk before God in their integrity, and practice nothing contrary to their light and conviction in his worship, God is merciful to them, even though they do not order everything according to the rule and measure of the word. So it was with those who came to the Passover in the days of Hezekiah. They had not cleansed themselves, but "ate the Passover contrary to what was written," 2Chr 30.18. The good king made a solemn prayer for them, suited to their occasion, "The good Lord pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people," verses 18-20. Here was a duty that, for its *substance*, was appointed by God; but there was a failure in the *manner* of its performance— they did not do it according to what was written, which is the sole rule of all religious duties. God was displeased with this, and yet He graciously passed

by the offense, and accepted those whose hearts were upright in what they did. In the meantime, I still judge that the use of forms is in itself obstructive of all the principal ends of prayer and sacred worship. Where they alone are used, they are opposite to the edification of the church; and where they are imposed to the absolute exclusion of other prayer, they are destructive of its liberty, and they render a good part of the purchase of Christ, of no effect.

Things being thus stated, it will be asked whether the use of such forms of prayer is lawful or not. To this inquiry something will be returned briefly in way of an answer, and an end will be put to this discourse. I say —

1. To *compose and write forms of prayer to be directive and doctrinal helps* to others, as to the matter and method to be used in the right discharge of this duty, is lawful; and in some cases it may be useful. It would be better, maybe, if the same thing were done in another way, suited to give *direction* in the case, and not cast into the *form of a prayer*, which is apt to divert the mind from the due consideration of its proper end and use to that which is not so. But this way of instruction is not to be looked at as unlawful merely for the form and method into which it is cast, while its true use, only, is attended to.

2. To *read, consider, and meditate* upon such *written prayers*, as to the matter and arguments of prayer expressed in them, composed by persons from their own experience and the light of Scripture directions; or to make use of expressions set down in them, where the hearts of those who read them are really affected, because they find their state and condition, their wants and desires, declared in them, *is not unlawful*, but may be of good use to some — though I must acknowledge, I never heard any expressing any great benefit which they received by this. But it is possible that some may

do so. For no such freedom of prayer is asserted that would make it unlawful for men to make use of any proper means to better enable them to pray. Nor is any such ability of prayer granted, that supersedes the duty of using means to increase and further it.

3. To set up and prescribe the use of such forms *universally*, in opposition and to the exclusion of *free prayer* by the aid of the Spirit of grace, is contrary not only to many divine precepts insisted on before, but to the light of nature itself, which require every man to pray, and on some occasions necessitating them to pray. But whatever may be the practice of some men, I do not know that any such opinion is pleaded for, and so I will not further oppose it.

4. It is not inquired whether *forms of prayer*, especially as they may be designed and used for other ends, and not to be read *instead* of prayer, have in their composition anything of *intrinsic evil* in them; for it is granted that they have not. But the inquiry is whether in their use as *prayers* they are hindrances to the right discharge of the duty of prayer according to the mind of God, and so may be unlawful in that respect. For I take it as granted that they are nowhere appointed by God for such a use, and nowhere commanded to be so used. From this, an argument may be formed against their having any interest in divine, acceptable worship; but this is not part of our present consideration. For if on the accounts mentioned, they do not appear contrary to, or inconsistent with, or are not used in a way exclusive of, that work of the Holy Spirit in prayer which we have described from the Scripture, nor are reducible to any divine prohibition, then while I may enjoy my own liberty, I will not contend with any about them. Nor will I now engage in the examination of the arguments pleaded on their behalf, which some have greatly multiplied, and which I suppose are not much to

the advantage of their cause. For in things of religious practice, one testimony of Scripture rightly explained and applied, with the experience of believers upon that testimony, is of more weight and value than a thousand dubious reasonings which cannot be evidently resolved into those principles. Therefore a few additional considerations will put an exit to this discourse.

1. Some observe that there are forms of prayer composed and prescribed to be used both in the Old Testament and the New. Such, they say, was the form of blessing prescribed to the priests on solemn occasions, as in Num 6.22-26, and the Psalms of David, and also the Lord's Prayer in the New Testament.

(1.) If this is so, then it proves that forms of prayer are not intrinsically evil, which is granted; yet the *use* of them may be unnecessary.

(2.) The argument will not hold, so far as it is usually extended at least: "God himself has prescribed some forms of prayer to be used by some persons on some occasions; therefore, men may invent, yes, and prescribe those forms that will be for common and constant use." The One who forbade all images, or all use of them, in sacred things, appointed the making of the cherubims in the tabernacle and temple. [7]

(3.) The argument taken from the practice under the Old Testament in this matter (if anything could be taken from there), when the people were carnal and tied to carnal ordinances, and applied to the duty and practice of believers under the New Testament and a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, has been disproved before.

(4.) The words prescribed to the priests were not a prayer, properly speaking, but an authoritative benediction, and an instituted sign of God's blessing the people. For it is added in the explication of that ordinance,

"Thus they will put my name on the children of Israel; and I will bless them," Num 6.27.

(5.) David's Psalms were given by immediate inspiration, and most of them were mystical and prophetic, appointed to be used in the church as all other Scriptures are; only some of them were to be used in a certain manner (namely, singing); and that manner was also determined by divine appointment.

(6.) That any form of prayer is appointed in the New Testament, to be used as a form, is neither granted nor can it be proved.

(7.) Give us prayers composed by divine inspiration, with a command for their use, with the time, manner, and form of their usage — which these instances prove to be lawful — and if they prove anything in this case, there will be no contest about them.

(8.) All and every one of the precedents or examples which we have in the whole Scripture, of the prayers of any of the people of God, men or women, all being accommodated to their present occasions, and uttered in the freedom of their own spirits, give testimony *for* free prayer, if not *against* the use of forms in that duty.

2. Moreover, it is said that "when anyone prays, his prayer is a form for all who join with him, whether in families or church-assemblies." Some lay great weight on this, though I am not able to discern the force of it in this case: for —

(1.) The question is solely about the one who prays, and his discharge of duty according to the mind of God, and not concerning those who join with him.

(2.) The conjunction of others with the one who prays according to his ability, is an express command of God.

(3.) Those who join him are at liberty, when it is their duty, to pray themselves.

(4.) Whatever is not a form in itself, is not a form to anyone; for more is required to make it a form than merely having the words and expressions not be of their own present invention. For them, it is the benefit of a gift, bestowed for their edification in its present exercise, according to the mind of God. Only that is a form of prayer, which someone *uses* as a form; for its nature depends on its use.

(5.) This argument is not cogent: [8] "God has commanded some to pray according to the ability they have received, and others to join with them in this; therefore, it is lawful to invent forms of prayer for ourselves or others, to be used as prayers by them or us."

3. What those who pretend to moderation in this matter plead, is that "prayer itself is a commanded duty; but praying by or with a prescribed form is only an outward manner and circumstance of it, which is indifferent; it may or may not be used as we see occasion." If a general rule to this purpose might be duly established, it would be of huge importance. But,

(1.) It is an easy thing to invent and prescribe such outward forms and manner of outward worship, as to leave nothing of the duty prescribed except the empty name.

(2.) Praying before an image, or worshipping God or Christ by an image, is but an outward mode of worship; yet it renders the whole of it idolatrous.

(3.) Any outward mode of worship, the attendance to which, or the observance of which, is prejudicial to the due performance of the duty to which it is annexed, is inexpedient. [9] And what there is of this in the present instance, must be judged from the preceding discourse.

1. *Jejune*: Lacking in nutritive value.
2. *Mean*: lowly or beggarly – impoverished or lacking in social status, education, and "refinement."
3. "Coelestes igniculi."
4. *Sedulous*: marked by care and persistent effort.
5. *Fancies*: something that many people believe, but is false.
6. **Jdg 17:13** Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!"
7. **Exo 25:18** "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. **Exo 26:31** "You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. **1Kng 6:23** Inside the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim *of* olive wood, *each* ten cubits high.
8. *Cogent*: powerfully persuasive.
9. *Inexpedient*: not suitable or advisable; not appropriate to the purpose.

Book VIII. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 1.

Monergism Books

Book VIII. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 1.

TWO DISCOURSES
THE ONE,
OF THE SPIRIT AS A COMFORTER;
THE OTHER,
AS HE IS THE AUTHOR OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.
London:
352

Prefatory note.

The two following discourses appeared posthumously in 1693. According to a statement of the author at the beginning of them, they complete his design in this exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit. The discourse on His office as a Comforter is valuable, from the exposition of several interesting texts. But the author gives us to understand that it is to be taken in connection with what he has written elsewhere on this office of the Spirit, and he refers especially to his works on *Communion with God*, and on the *Perseverance of the Saints*. See vols. II. and XI. The discourse on *Spiritual Gifts*, though comparatively short, is the second part of the main body of the whole work on the Spirit; and from various allusions to it in other works of the author, he seems to have attached considerable importance to it. See vol. XV. p. 249. [1]

1. From Wm. Goold's 1862 edition of Owen's *Works*, vol XV, p. 249: "Of these officers, in their distinction into apostles and evangelists, with their call, gifts, power, and work, I have treated at large in my "Discourse of Spiritual Gifts." *Editors footnote on p. 249:* These words are printed in the original edition as if they were the title of a particular treatise by our author. His treatise under that title will be found in vol. iv. of his *Doctrinal Works*; but it seems to have been published in 1693, twelve years after the present work appeared. Such a discourse is promised in his preface to his treatise on "the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer," which was published in 1682, a year after the publication of the present work. There is some discussion on the subject of spiritual gifts in the first chapter of his great work on the Holy Spirit; but a special and separate treatise seems alluded to in the text above. To the " Discourse of Spiritual Gifts," as published in 1693, there is a preface by Nathaniel Mather; from which the reader is led to infer that it was then published for the first time. Perhaps the difficulty may be obviated by the supposition that Owen intended to publish it immediately, and refers to it in this work by anticipation. — Ed.

Analysis of the first treatise.

In the work of the Spirit as a Comforter, there are to be considered — I. His special office as such; II. His discharge of it; and, III. The effects of it towards believers.

I. In his *office*, there are implied a special trust, mission, name, and work, (ch. 1).

II. The general properties of this office, as *discharged* by the Holy Spirit, are then unfolded:

1. Infinite condescension; 2. Unspeakable love; 3. Infinite power; and, 4. Unchangeable continuance with the church, (ch. 2).

III. In regard to his *effects* on believers, it is first proved that his effectual consolations are the privilege of believers exclusively, (ch. 3).

And some of his operations in them as such, and of the benefits which they enjoy in consequence, are specified. His operations in them *generally* are unfolded under the head of the "inhabitation of the Spirit;" which is first discriminated from erroneous views respecting it, and then proved from Scripture, (ch. 4).

Among the *special* benefits indicated are — 1. The unction of the Spirit, (ch. 5); 2. The sealing of the Spirit, expounded in a brief comment on Eph 1.13; 4.30, (ch. 6); and, 3. The Spirit as an earnest, considered in reference to 2Cor 1.22; 5.5; Eph 1.14. An application of the preceding truths concludes the treatise, (ch. 7).

Analysis of the second treatise.

The dispensation of the Spirit for the edification of the church is twofold; including, first, the bestowal of saving grace; and, secondly, the communication of spiritual gifts. The former has already been considered in books III-VIII of this work on the dispensation of the Spirit. The latter, spiritual gifts, as distinguished from saving graces, it is proposed to discuss in reference to the following points: 1. Their name; 2. Their nature in general; 3. Their distribution; 4. Their particular nature; and, 5. Their use in the church of God. Some remarks are made on their name, (ch. 1).

Their nature generally is considered with reference —

1. To their points of agreement with saving graces,

(1.) They are both the purchase of Christ;

(2.) They agree in their immediate efficient cause — the Holy Spirit;

(3.) In the end that is contemplated — the good of the church; and,

(4.) In the bounty of Christ, as their source.

2. The points of difference are —

(1.) Saving graces are the *fruit*, gifts are but the *effects* of the Spirit;

(2.) Saving graces are the fruit of electing love;

(3.) The result of the covenant; and

(4.) Have respect to the priestly office of Christ;

(5.) Gifts and graces differ as to their ultimate issue; the former (gifts) being sometimes lost: the latter (graces) never;

(6.) Saving graces are imparted directly for the benefit of those who receive them, and gifts for the benefit of others; and,

(7.) They differ, finally and chiefly, in their subjects, operations, and effects, (ch. 2).

Gifts are distributed into —

1. Gifts implying powers and duties conjoined; and,

2. Gifts qualifying for duties simply.

1. Of the former, a subdivision is made into extraordinary and ordinary gifts:

(1.) Extraordinary gifts constituted extraordinary officers — apostles, evangelists, and prophets, (ch. 3). The gifts themselves, in virtue of which they exercised these extraordinary offices, are first, powers exceeding the natural faculties of their minds; and secondly, the special enlargement and adaptation of their natural faculties for their work. These are considered in an exposition of 1Cor 12.7-11, (ch. 4). The origin, duration, use, and end, of extraordinary gifts are considered, (ch. 5).

(2.) The ordinary gifts are viewed in relation to the Christian ministry, the eminent value of which is seen from the grandeur of its introduction, from its original acquisition, from the immediate cause of its actual communication, from its own nature, from the variety of offices in it, and from the end designed by it, (ch. 6).

The reality of the spiritual gifts requisite for the discharge of the ministerial office is proved from these: the promise of Christ, Mat 28.20; the presence of Christ by the Spirit; the covenant promise of the Spirit, Isa 59.21; the name given to the gospel, "The ministration of the Spirit;" the end for which the Spirit is promised, administered, and continued; the plain assertions of Scripture; the indispensable necessity for them; and from the actual enjoyment and experience of them, (ch. 7). These gifts are enumerated: first, with respect to doctrine — wisdom, skill in the division of the word, and utterance; secondly, with respect to the worship of God; and, thirdly, with respect to the rule of the church.

2. The ordinary gifts of the Spirit, qualifying for duties only, are alluded to; but the previous discussions are held to supersede the necessity of any full consideration of them. A brief inquiry ensues into the manner in which we may come to participate in these gifts, ministerially or more privately, (ch. 8). — Ed.

The Preface.

No one who is acquainted with the Scriptures and believes them, can doubt that there are various great and eminent promises referring to New Testament times, concerning the pouring out of the Spirit. By performing them, a church has been begotten and maintained in the world through all ages since the ascension of Christ, sometimes with greater light and spiritual luster, and sometimes with less. It has been one of the glories of the Protestant Reformation that it has been accompanied with a very conspicuous and remarkable effusion of the Spirit. And indeed, thereby a seal from heaven has been set and a witness borne to that great work of God. In this invaluable blessing, we in this nation have had a rich and plentiful share, insomuch that it seems Satan and his ministers have been tormented and exasperated by it. And from this it has come to pass that some among us have risen up, who have manifested they are not only despisers in heart, but virulent reproachers of the operations of the Spirit. God, who knows how to bring good out of evil, for holy and blessed ends of his own, allowed those horrid blasphemies to be particularly vented.

It was on this occasion that this great, and learned, and holy person, the author of these discourses, took up thoughts of writing concerning the blessed Spirit and his whole economy. This is what I understood from him a number of years ago, discussing with him concerning some books, then newly published, full of contumely [1] and contempt of the Holy Spirit and his operations. For as it was with Paul at Athens when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, so Dr. Owen's spirit was stirred in him when he read the scoffs and blasphemies cast upon the Holy Spirit and his grace, and gifts, and aids, in some recent writers.

If Pelagius had not vented his corrupt opinions concerning the grace of God, it is likely the church would never have had the learned and excellent writings of Augustine in defense of it. It appears from Bradwardin that the revival of Pelagianism in his days stirred up his zealous and pious spirit to write that profound and elaborate book of his, "*De Causa Dei*." Arminius and the Jesuits, endeavoring to plant the same weed again, produced the scholastic writings of Twisse and Ames [2] (not to mention foreign divines); for which we in this generation have abundant cause for enlarged thankfulness to the Father of lights. The occasion which the Holy Ghost laid hold on to carry forth Paul to write his Epistle to the Galatians (in which the doctrine of justification by faith is so fully cleared), was bringing "another gospel" in among them by corrupt teachers; after this, many in those churches were soon drawn away. The obstinate adherence of many among the Jews to the Mosaic rites and observances, and the inclination of others to apostatize from the New Testament worship and ordinances, was in like manner the occasion of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The light which shines and is held out in these epistles, the church of Christ could ill have wanted.

The like way and working of the wisdom of God is to be seen and adored in stirring up this learned and excellent person to communicate and leave to the world that light, touching the Spirit and his operations, which he had received by that Spirit from the sacred oracles of truth, the Scriptures.

To what advantage and increase of light it is performed, is not for so incompetent a pen to say as writes this. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that the discerning reader will observe such excellencies shining out in this and others of this great author's writings, as to greatly commend them to the church of God, and will do so in ages to come, however this corrupt and degenerate generation may entertain them. They are not the crude, and hasty, and untimely abortions of a self-full, distempered spirit — much less the boilings-over of inward corruption and rottenness put to fermenting. But they are the mature, sedate, and seasonable issues of a rich magazine of learning, well digested with great exactness of judgment. There is in them a great light cast and reflected on, as well as derived from, the holy Scriptures, those inexhaustible mines of light in sacred things. They are not filled with vain, impertinent jangling, nor with a noise of multiplied futile distinctions, nor with novel and uncouth terms foreign to the things of God, as the manner of some writers is, *to the point of nausea*. But there is in them a happy and rare conjunction of firm solidity, enlightening clearness, and heart-searching spiritualness, evidencing themselves all along, and thereby approving and commending his writings to the judgment, conscience, spiritual taste, and experience, of all those who have any acquaintance with and relish for the gospel.

On these and like accounts, the writings of this great and learned man, and also his ordinary sermons, if any of them will be published (as possibly some of them may), will be — while the world stands — an upbraiding and

condemning of this generation, whose vitiated and ill-affected eyes could not bear so great a light set up and shining on a candlestick, and which therefore endeavored to put it under a bushel.

These two discourses, with those formerly published, make up all that Dr. Owen perfected or designed on this subject of the Spirit, as the reader may perceive in the account which he himself has given in his prefaces to some of the former pieces, published by himself in his lifetime. And there are some ether lucubrations [3] of his on subjects nearly allied to these, which possibly may be published hereafter — namely, one entitled, "The Evidences of the Faith of God's Elect," and perhaps some others. What further he might have had in his thoughts to do is known to Him whom he served so industriously and so faithfully in his spirit in the gospel while he was here on earth, and with whom he now enjoys the reward of all his labors and all his sufferings. For concerning Dr. Owen, it is certain that as God gave him very transcendent abilities, so with that he gave him a boundless enlargedness of heart, and an insatiable desire to do service to Christ and his church, insomuch that he was thereby carried on through great bodily weakness, languishing, and pains, besides manifold other trials and discouragements, to bring out of his treasury, like a scribe well instructed in the kingdom of heaven, many useful and excellent fruits of his studies — much beyond the expectation and hopes of those who saw how often and how long he was near the grave.

But while he was thus indefatigably and restlessly laying out for the service of Christ, in this and succeeding generations, those rich talents with which he was furnished, his Lord said to him, "Well done, you good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord." No man ever yet, but Jesus Christ, was able to finish all that was in his heart to do for God. On the

removal of such accomplished and useful persons, I have sometimes relieved myself with this thought: that Christ lives in heaven still, and the blessed Spirit, from whom the head and heart of this chosen vessel were so richly replenished, lives still.

Nath. Mather [4]

October 27, 1692.

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1. *Contumely*: a rude expression intended to offend or hurt.
2. Thomas Bradwardine (c. 1290-1349), "The Cause of God." William Twisse (1578–1646) Prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly. William Ames (1576-1633), author of *The Marrow of Theology.*
3. *Lucubration*: a solemn literary work that is the product of laborious cogitation.
4. Nathaniel Mather was the son of Richard Mather, an eminent Puritan divine of Lancashire, from whom descended children and grandchildren distinguished as theologians and preachers both in this country and in America. Nathaniel was pastor of a numerous congregation in Lime Street, London, where he died; a.d. 1697. — Ed.

A DISCOURSE — OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A COMFORTER.

Chapter I. The Holy Ghost the comforter of the church by way of office

The Holy Ghost the comforter of the church by way of office — How he is the church's advocate — Joh 14.16; 1Joh 2.1, 2; Joh 16.8-11 explained.

What remains to complete our discourses concerning the *dispensation of the Holy Spirit*, is the office and work that he has undertaken for the consolation of the church; and —

Three things are to be considered with respect to this head, of the grace of the gospel:

I. That the Holy Spirit is the comforter of the church by way of *especial office*.

II. What is in that office, or what the *discharge* of it consists in.

III. What the *effects* of it are towards believers.

It must be granted that there is some impropriety in that expression, by the *way of office*. An office is not *simply* (nor, it may be, properly) spoken of a divine person, who is absolutely so and nothing else. But a similar impropriety is to be found in most of the expressions which we use

concerning God. For who can speak of him rightly or as he should? Only, we have a safe rule by which to express our conceptions, specifically, what he says of Himself. And he has taught us to learn the work of the Holy Ghost towards us in this matter by ascribing to him those things which belong to an office among men.

Four things are required for the constitution of an office:

1. A special *trust*;
2. A special *mission* or commission;
3. A special *name*;
4. A special *work*.

All these are required for an office properly so called. And where they are complied with by a voluntary susception [1] in the person intended for this, an office is completely constituted. We must inquire how these things, in a divine manner, concur in the work of the Holy Spirit *as* he is the comforter of the church.

First. He is entrusted with this work, and of his own will he has taken it upon himself. For when our Savior was leaving the world, and had a full view of all the evils, troubles, dejections, and disconsolations which would befall his disciples, and knew full well that if they were left to themselves, they would faint and perish under them, he gives them assurance that the work of their consolation and support was entrusted and committed to the Holy Spirit, and that he would both take care about it, and perfect it accordingly.

The Lord Christ, when he left this world, was very far from laying aside his love for and care of his disciples. He has given us the highest assurance that he continues the same care forever, the same love and grace towards us, which he had and exercised when he laid down his life for us. See Heb

4.14-16, 7.25-26. [2] But inasmuch as there was a double work yet to be performed in our behalf, one towards God and the other in ourselves, he has taken a twofold way for its performance. He was to discharge that work towards God immediately in his human nature; for there neither is nor can be any other mediator between God and man. He does this by his intercession. Hence there was a necessity that, as to his human nature, "heaven must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things," Acts 3.21. This was true both with respect to himself and to us.

1. Three things with respect to himself, made the exaltation of his human nature in heaven necessary; for —

(1.) It was to be a pledge and token of God's acceptance of him, and approval of what he had done in the world, Joh 16.7-8. [3] For what could more declare or evidence the consent and delight of God in what he had done and suffered, than after he had been so ignominiously treated in the world, to receive him visibly, gloriously, and triumphantly into heaven? "He was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels," and in the issue, "received up into glory," 1Tim 3.16. In this, God set the great seal of heaven to Christ's work of mediation, and the preaching of the gospel which ensued from that. And a testimony to this filled his enemies with rage and madness, Acts 7.55-58. [4] His resurrection confirmed his *doctrine* with undeniable efficacy; but his assumption into heaven testified to his *person* with an astonishing glory.

(2.) It was necessary with respect to the human nature itself, so that after all its labors and sufferings, it might be "crowned with glory and honor." He was to "suffer" and "enter into his glory," Luk 24.26. Some dispute whether Christ in his human nature merited anything for himself or not. But not to enmesh ourselves in the subtleties of that inquiry, [5] it is unquestionable that

the highest glory was due him upon his accomplishment of the work committed to him in this world, which therefore he accordingly lays claim to, Joh 17.4-5. [6] It was so —

(3.) With respect to the glorious administration of his kingdom. For just as his kingdom is not *of* this world, so it is not only *over* this world, or the whole creation below — the angels of glory, those principalities and powers above, are subject to him and belong to his dominion, Eph 1.21; Phi 2.9-11. Among them, attended with their ready service and obedience to all his commands, he exercises the powers of his glorious kingdom. Those who would have him forsake his high and glorious throne in heaven, to come and reign among them on the earth, would only degrade him from his glory, without the least advantage to themselves — unless they suppose they are more fit attendants for his regal dignity than the angels themselves, who are mighty in strength and glory.

2. The presence of the human nature of Christ in heaven was necessary with respect to us. The remainder of his work with God on our behalf was to be carried on by intercession, Heb 7.25-27. And because this intercession consists in the virtual representation of his oblation, or of himself as a lamb slain in sacrifice, it could not be done without his continual appearing in the presence of God, Heb 9.24.

The other part of the work of Christ respects the church, or believers, as its immediate object; so in particular, does his comforting and supporting them. This is that work which in a particular manner is committed and entrusted to the Holy Spirit, after the departure of the human nature of Christ into heaven.

But two things are to be observed concerning it:

1. That because this whole work consists in the communication of spiritual light, grace, and joy to the souls of believers, it was no less the immediate work of the Holy Ghost while the Lord Christ was upon the earth, than it is now that he is absent in heaven. Only, during the time of his life here below, in the days of his flesh, his holy disciples looked at him as the only spring and foundation of all their consolation, their only support, guide, and protector, as they had just cause to do. They had no insight yet into the mystery of the dispensation of the Spirit; nor was he yet so given or poured out as to evidence himself and his operation to their souls. Therefore, they looked at themselves as utterly undone when their Lord and Master began to acquaint them with his leaving. No sooner did he tell them of it than "sorrow filled their hearts," Joh 16.6. Thus he immediately lets them know that this great work of relieving them from all their sorrows and fears, of dispelling their disconsolations, and supporting them under their trouble, was committed to the Holy Ghost. And this work would be performed by Him in so eminent a manner, that Christ's departure from them would be to their advantage, Joh 16.7.

This is why the Holy Spirit did not then first begin, really and effectively, to be the comforter of believers upon the departure of Christ from his disciples; rather, he is then first *promised* to be so, on a double account:

(1.) Of the full declaration and manifestation of it. Things are often said to *be*, in the Scripture, when they appear and are made manifest. We have an eminent instance of this in Joh 7.38-39. [7] Up to then, the disciples had looked for everything immediately from Christ in the flesh, for the dispensation of the Spirit was hidden from them; but now this dispensation also was to be manifested to them. Hence the apostle affirms that "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet from here on we know him no

more," 2Cor 5.16 — that is, so as to look for grace and consolation immediately from him in the flesh, as it is evident the apostles did before they were instructed in this unknown office of the Holy Ghost.

(2.) Of the full exhibition and eminent communication of him to this end. This was in every kind reserved for the exaltation of Christ, when he received the promise of the Spirit from the Father, and poured it out upon his disciples.

2. The Lord Christ does not hereby cease to be the comforter of his church; for what he does by his Spirit, he does by himself. He is with us to the end of the world by his Spirit being with us; and he dwells in us by the Spirit dwelling in us; and whatever else is done by the Spirit is done by him. And this is so, upon a threefold account: for —

(1.) The Lord Christ as mediator, is God and man in one person, and the divine nature is to be considered in all his mediatory operations. For the one who works them is God, and he works them all as God-man, for which they are *theandrical*.[8] And this is proposed to us in the greatest acts of his humiliation, which the divine nature in itself is not formally capable of. So "God purchased the church with his own blood," Acts 20.28. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phi 2.6-8. Now, in this respect the Lord Christ and the Holy Spirit are one in nature, essence, will, and power. As he said of the Father, "I and my Father are one," Joh 10.30; so it is with the Spirit — he and the Spirit are one. Hence all the works of the Holy Spirit are his, by him. As his works were the works of the Father, and the works of the Father were his, all the operations of the holy Trinity, as to things external to their divine

subsistence being undivided, so the work of the Holy Spirit in the consolation of the church is his work also.

(2.) Because the Holy Spirit in this condescension to office, acts for Christ and in his name. So the Son acted *for* and *in* the name of the Father, wherever he ascribed what he did to the Father in a specific manner: "The word," he says, "which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me," Joh 14.24. It is his originally and eminently, because as spoken by the Lord Christ, he was said to speak it by him. So those acts of the Spirit by which he comforts believers, are the acts of Christ, because the Spirit speaks and acts *for him* and *in his name*.

(3.) All those things, those acts of light, grace, and mercy, by which the souls of the disciples of Christ are comforted by the Holy Ghost, are the things of Christ — that is, they are special fruits of his mediation. So says our Savior himself about him and his work: "He will glorify me; for he will receive from mine, and will show it to you," Joh 16.14. All that consolation, peace, and joy, which he communicates to believers, indeed, all that he does in his whole work towards the elect, is but the effectual communication of the fruits of the mediation of Christ to them. And this is the first thing that constitutes the office of the Comforter: this work is committed and entrusted to him in a special manner which, in the infinite condescension of his own will, he takes upon himself.

Secondly. It further evinces the nature of an office in that he is said to be *sent to the work*; and mission always includes commission. The one who is sent is entrusted and empowered as to what he is sent about. See Psa 104.30; Joh 14.26, 15.26, 16.7. [9] The nature of this sending of the Spirit, and how it is spoken of him in general, has been considered before, in our declaration of his general adjuncts, or what is affirmed about him in the

Scripture; and it need not be insisted on here again. It is now mentioned only as an evidence to prove that, in this work of his towards us, he has taken upon himself that which has the nature of an office. For that which he is sent to perform is his office, and he will not fail in the discharge of it. It is, in itself, a great principle of consolation to all true believers, and an effectual means of their support and refreshment, to consider that not only is the Holy Ghost their comforter, but he is also sent by the Father and the Son to be such a comforter. Nor can there be a more uncontrollable evidence of the care of Jesus Christ over his church, and towards his disciples in all their sorrows and sufferings, than this: that he sends the Holy Ghost to be their comforter.

Thirdly, He has a special *name* given to him, expressing and declaring his office. When the Son of God was to be *incarnate and* born in the world, he had a special *name* given to him: "He will be called Jesus." Now, although in this name there was a sign of the work he was to do — for he was called Jesus, "because he was to save his people from their sins," Mat 1.21 — yet it was also that proper name by which he was to be distinguished from other persons. So the Holy Spirit has no other name than that of the Holy Spirit, which is *characteristic* of the third person in the holy Trinity, as declared before.

Both the names *Jesus* and *Christ*, though neither of them is the name of an office (as someone has dreamed of lately), yet they respect the work which he had to do, and the office which he was to undergo. And without these, he could not have rightly been called such. So too, the Holy Ghost has a name given to him which is not distinctive with respect to his personality, but denominative with respect to his work, and this is *the Paraclete*.

1. This name is used only by the apostle John, and that is in his Gospel only, from the mouth of Christ, Joh 14.16, 26, 15.26, 16.7. And the apostle uses it once himself, applying it to Christ, 1Joh 2.1-2, where we render it "an *advocate*." [10]

The Syriac interpreter retains the name *Paraclita*; [11] this is not, as some imagine, from the prior use of that word among the Jews, which cannot be proved. Nor is it likely our Savior made use of a Greek word barbarously corrupted; *ha-menachem* [12] was the word he employed to this purpose. But looking at it as *a proper name* of the Spirit with respect to his office, he would not translate it.

As this word is applied to Christ (which it is in this one place, 1Joh 2.1), it respects his *intercession*, and it gives us light into the nature of it. That it is his intercession which the apostle intends is evident from its relation to his being "our propitiation;" for the oblation of Christ on the earth is the foundation of his intercession in heaven. And in this he undertakes our patronage, as our advocate, to plead our cause, and in a special manner, to keep evil away from us. For the intercession of Christ in general respects the procurement of all grace and mercy for us, everything by which we may be "saved to the uttermost," Heb 7.25, 26. And yet his intercession for us as an *advocate* respects sin only, and the evil consequents of it. For in 1Joh 2.1 he is said to be our *advocate*, and in this place alone he is said to be so only with respect to sin: "If any man *sins*, we have an advocate." Therefore, his being so in particular respects that part of his intercession in which he undertakes our defense and protection when accused of sin: for Satan is the *accuser*, [13] Rev 12.10. And when he accuses believers of sin, Christ is their *paracletos*, their *patron and advocate*. For according to the duty of a patron or advocate in criminal causes, partly he shows what is false in the

accusation (aggravated above the truth, or proceeds upon mistakes); and partly he shows that the crimes charged do not have that malice in them which is pretended. But principally, Christ pleads his propitiation [14] for them — that so far as they are really guilty, they may be graciously discharged.

As for this name, as applied to the Holy Spirit, some translate it as *Comforter*, some as *Advocate*, and some retain the Greek word *Paraclete*. It may be best interpreted from the nature of the work assigned to him under that name. Some would confine the whole work intended under this name to his *teaching*, for which he is principally promised. For "the matter and manner of his teaching, what he teaches, and the way he does it," they say, " is the ground of all consolation to the church." And there may be something in this interpretation of the word, taking "teaching" in a large sense, for all his internal, divine, spiritual operations. So we are said to be "taught by God" when faith is worked in us, and we are enabled to come to Christ thereby. And all our consolations are from such internal divine operations. But take "teaching" properly, and we will see that it is but one distinct act of the work of the Holy Ghost (as promised here) among many. But —

2. The work of a *Comforter* is principally ascribed to him; for —

(1.) It is evident from the whole context and the occasion of the promise, that under this name he is principally intended as a comforter. It was with respect to the troubles and sorrows of his disciples, with their relief in this, that the Spirit is promised under this name by our Savior. "I will not," he says, "leave you orphans," Joh 14.18; — "Though I go away from you, yet I will not leave you in a desolate and disconsolate condition." How will that be prevented in his absence, the one who was the life and spring of all their comforts? He says, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another,"

verse 16, "to be your comforter." So he renews again his promise of sending the Spirit under this name, because "sorrow had filled their heart" upon the apprehension of his departure, Joh 16.6-7. Therefore, he is principally considered as a *comforter.* And as we will see afterward, this is his principal work, most suited to his nature, as he is the Spirit of peace, love, and joy. For the one who is the eternal, essential love of the Divine Being, as existing in the distinct persons of the Trinity, is most fit to communicate a sense of divine love, with delight and joy, to the souls of believers. Hereby he sets up the "kingdom of God" in them, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom 14.17. And in nothing does he so evidence his presence in the hearts and spirits of any, as he does by disposing them to spiritual love and joy. For, "shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts," as in Rom 5.5, he produces a principle and frame of *divine love* in our souls, and fills us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1Pet 1.8 Therefore, the attribution of this name to him, *The Comforter*, evidences that he performs this work in the way of an office.

(2.) Nor is the meaning of an *Advocate* to be omitted, seeing that what he does as such, also tends to the consolation of the church. And we must first observe that the Holy Spirit is not our advocate with God. This belongs to Jesus Christ alone, and it is a part of *his* office. The Spirit is said, indeed, to "make intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered," Rom 8.26; but he does not do this immediately, or in his own person. He "makes intercession for us" in no other way than by enabling us to make intercession *according to the mind of God*. For making intercession *formally* is utterly inconsistent with the divine nature and with his person; he has no other nature than that which is divine. He is therefore incapable of being our *advocate* with God; the Lord Christ alone is such; and that is on

account of his precedent propitiation made for us. But the Spirit is an *advocate* for the church — in, with, and against the world. Such an advocate is one that undertakes the protection and defense of another as to any cause in which he is engaged. The cause in which the disciples of Christ are engaged, in and against the world, is the truth of the gospel — the power and kingdom of their Lord and Master. This is what they testify to; this is opposed by the world; and this (under various forms, appearances, and pretenses) is what they suffer reproaches and persecutions for in every generation. In this cause, the Holy Spirit is their advocate, justifying Jesus Christ and the gospel against the world.

And he does this in three ways:

[1.] By suggesting to and furnishing the witnesses of Christ with pleas and arguments to the conviction of gainsayers. [15] It is promised that he would do so, Mat 10.18-20, "You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought of how or what you will speak: for in that same hour it will be given to you what you will speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you." They were to be "given up," — that is, delivered up as malefactors — to kings and rulers, for their faith in Christ, and the testimony they gave to him. In this condition, the best of men are apt to be concerned about their answers, and the *plea* they are to make in defense of themselves and their cause. Our Savior, therefore, gives them encouragement, not only from the truth and goodness of their cause, but also from the ability they would have in pleading for it to the conviction or confusion of their adversaries. And he tells them this would come to pass, not by any power or faculty in themselves, but by the aid and supply they would receive from this *Advocate*, who *in them* would

speak *by them*. This was that "mouth and wisdom" which he promised to them, "which all their adversaries would not be able to gainsay or resist," Luk 21.15; — a present supply of courage, boldness, and liberty of speech, above and beyond their natural temper and abilities, immediately upon their receiving of the Holy Ghost.

And their very enemies saw the effects of it, to their astonishment. Upon the plea they made before the council at Jerusalem, it is said that "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled," Acts 4.13. They saw their outward condition, that they were *poor*, and of the lowliest of the people. And yet they carried it with courage and boldness before this great Sanhedrin, with whose authority and unusual appearance in grandeur, all persons of their sort tended to be abashed and to tremble at them. The Sanhedrin found them *ignorant* and *unlearned* in that skill and learning which the world admired, yet they pleaded their cause to their confusion. They could not help, therefore, but discern and acknowledge that there was a *divine power* present with them, which moved them above themselves, their state, their natural or acquired abilities. This was the work of this *Advocate* in them, who had undertaken the defense of their cause. So when Paul pleaded the same cause before Agrippa and Felix, one of them confessed his conviction, and the other trembled in his judgment-seat. [16]

Neither has the Spirit been lacking as to the defense of the same cause, in the same manner, in succeeding generations. The story of the church is filled with instances of persons who were lowly in their outward condition, timid by nature, and unaccustomed to dangers, unlearned and low in their natural abilities; those who, in the face of rulers and potentates, in the sight of prisons, tortures, and fires provided for their destruction, have pleaded

the cause of the gospel with courage and success, to the astonishment and confusion of their adversaries. Nor will any disciple of Christ in the same case, lack similar assistance in some due measure and proportion, who *expects* it from the Advocate in a believing way and *depends* on it. We have examples of this every day in those who are moved above their own natural temper and abilities, to their own admiration.[17] Being conscious of their own fears, despondencies, and disabilities, it is a surprise to them to find that all their fears have disappeared and their minds have been enlarged, when they have been called to trial for their testimony of the gospel. We are, in such cases, to make use of any reason, skill, wisdom, or ability of speech which we have, or any other honest and advantageous circumstances which present themselves to us, as the apostle Paul did on all occasions. But our *dependence* is to be solely on the presence and supplies of our blessed Advocate, who will not allow us to be utterly defective in what is necessary to the defense and justification of our cause.

[2.] He is the advocate for Christ, the church, and the gospel, in and by his communication of spiritual gifts, both extraordinary and ordinary, to those who believe; for these are things, at least in their effects, that are visible to the world. Where men are not utterly blinded by prejudice, love of sin and of the world, they cannot help but discern something of a divine power in these supernatural gifts. Therefore, they openly testify to the divine approbation of the gospel, and the faith that is in Christ Jesus. So the apostle confirms the truths that he had preached by this argument, that with and by it, or in the confirmation of it, the Spirit (as to the communication of gifts) was received, Gal 3.2.[18] And he is the church's advocate in this, justifying their cause openly and visibly by this dispensation of his power towards them and in their behalf. But because we have treated the nature

and use of these spiritual gifts separately and at large, I will not insist on the consideration of them here. [19]

[3.] By internal efficacy in the dispensation of the word. In this also, he is the advocate of the church against the world, as he is declared in Joh 16.8-11: "When he has come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." What is ascribed to him with respect to the world is expressed by the word *elegzei* [20] — "he will reprove" or convince. *Elegcho* [21] is used variously in the Scripture. Sometimes it means to manifest, or bring to light: Eph 5.13, "For all things that are reproved," or discovered, "are made manifest by the light." [22] And it has the same sense in Joh 3.20. [23] Sometimes it is to rebuke and reprove: 1Tim 5.20, "Those who sin rebuke before all." So also in Rev 3.19 and Tit 1.13. Sometimes it is to so convince that the mouth of an adversary is stopped, so he will have nothing to answer or reply: Joh 8.9, "Being convicted by their own conscience;" so that, not having a word to reply, they deserted their cause. Thus Tit 1.9, "To convince gainsayers," is explained in verse 11, by *epistomizein*, [24] "to stop their mouth," namely, by the convincing evidence of truth. *Elegchos* [25] is uncontrollable evidence, or an evident argument, Heb 11.1. Therefore, *elegchein* in Tit 1.9 means, "by undeniable argument and evidence, to so convince the world, or the adversaries of Christ and the gospel, that they will have nothing to reply." This is the work and duty of an advocate who will absolutely vindicate his client when his cause will bear it.

The effect of this is twofold — for all persons, upon such an overpowering conviction, react in one of these two ways:

1*st*. They yield to the truth and embrace it, finding no ground to stand upon in its refusal; or,

2*dly*. They fly into a desperate rage and madness, being obstinate in their hatred against the truth, and destitute of all reason to oppose it.

We have an instance of the former way in those Jews to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Reproving and convincing of them beyond all contradiction, "they were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what will we do?" and with this, they came over to the faith, Acts 2.37, 41. Of the latter, we have many instances in the dealings of our Savior with that people. For whenever he had convinced them, and stopped their mouths as to the cause in hand, they called him Beelzebub, cried out that he had a devil, took up stones to throw at him, and conspired for his death, all with demonstrations of desperate rage and madness, Joh 8.48, 59, 10.20, 31, 39. So it was in the case of Stephen, and the testimony he gave to Christ, Acts 7.54-58; and with Paul, Acts 22.22-23 — this was an instance of bestial rage that is not to be paralleled in any other case; but it has often fallen out this way in the world. This work of the Holy Ghost, as the advocate of the church, has ever had, and still has, the same effects on the world. Many, being convicted by him in the dispensation of the word, are really humbled and converted to the faith. So God "adds daily to the church those who will be saved." Act 2.47 But most of the world, by that same work, is enraged against Christ, the gospel, and those by whom it is dispensed. While the word is preached in a formal manner, the world is well enough contented that it should have a quiet passage among them; but wherever the Holy Ghost produces a convincing efficacy in its dispensation, the world is enraged by it. This is no less an evidence of the power of their conviction, than the other reaction is of a better success.

The subject-matter concerning which the Holy Ghost manages his plea by the word against the world, as the advocate of the church, corresponds to the three heads of "sin, righteousness, and judgment," Joh 16.8; their special nature is declared in verses 9-11.

(1*st*.) What sin it is in particular that the Holy Spirit will so plead with the world about, and convince them of, is declared in verse 9: "Of sin, because they do not believe in me." There are many sins which men may be convinced of by the light of nature, Rom 2.14-15; [26] and more that they are reproved for by the letter of the law; and it is also the work of the Spirit in general to make these convictions effectual. But these do not belong to the cause which he pleads for the church against the world; nor is it such that any can be brought to conviction about by the light of nature or the sentence of the law; but it is the work of the Spirit alone, by the gospel.

And, in the first place, this sin is *unbelief* — specifically, not believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. Jesus testified to this concerning himself; his works evinced him to be such; and both Moses and the prophets bore witness to it. And so he tells the Jews that if they did not believe that he was the Son of God, the Messiah and Savior of the world, "they would die in their sins," Joh 8.21, 24. But in this unbelief, in this rejection of Christ, the Jews and the rest of the world justified themselves. They not only did so, but they despised and persecuted those who believed in him. This was the fundamental difference between believers and the world, the crux of that cause in which they were rejected by the world as foolish, and condemned as impious. And in this, the Holy Ghost was their advocate. For by such undeniable evidences, arguments, and testimonies, he so convinced the world of the truth and glory of Christ, and the sin of unbelief, that they were everywhere either

converted or enraged by it. Some of them, upon this conviction, "gladly received the word, and were baptized," Acts 2.41. Others, upon the preaching of the same truth by the apostles, "were cut to the heart, and conspired to slay them," Act 5.33. The Spirit still continues in this work. And it is an act of the same kind by which he still in particular, convinces anyone of the sin of unbelief, which cannot be done except by the effectual internal operation of his power.

(2*dly*.) He thus convinces the world of *righteousness*: Joh 16.10, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more." Both the personal righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of his office are intended. For concerning both these, the church has a contest with the world; and they belong to that cause in which the Holy Spirit is their advocate. Christ was looked at by the world as an evil-doer; accused of being a glutton, a wine-bibber, a seditious person, a seducer, a blasphemer, a malefactor, in every kind — for which his disciples were both despised and destroyed for believing in such a one; and there is no declaring how they were scorned and reproached, and what they suffered on this account. In the meantime, they pleaded and gave testimony to his righteousness: that "he did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth;" 1Pet 2.22 that "he fulfilled all righteousness," Mat 3.15 and was the "Holy One" of God.Act 3.14 And in this, the Holy Ghost was their advocate, convincing the world principally by this argument: that after all he did and suffered in this world, as the highest evidence imaginable of God's approbation of him and what he did, he had gone to the Father, or was assumed into glory. [27]

The poor blind man whose eyes were opened by Christ, pleaded this as a forceful argument against the Jews: that Christ was no sinner, that God had heard him, and so he had opened the man's eyes. They could not bear his

evidence and conviction; rather, it turned them to rage and madness, Joh 9.30-34. How much more glorious and effectual this evidence must be of Christ's righteousness and holiness, and of God's approbation of him: that after all he did in this world, he went to his Father, and was taken up into glory! For such is the meaning of these words, "You will see me no more;" that is, "An end will be put to my state of humiliation, and of my converse [28] with you in this world, because I am to enter into my glory." Undeniable testimony was given by the Holy Ghost, to the conviction of the world, that the Lord Christ then went to his Father, and was so gloriously exalted. This argument is thus pleaded by Peter, Acts 2.33. [29] This is enough to stop the mouths of all the world in this cause: that he sent the Holy Ghost from the Father to communicate spiritual gifts of all sorts to his disciples — there could be no higher evidence of his acceptance, power, and glory with the Father. And the Spirit still continues the same testimony, in the communication of ordinary gifts in the ministry of the gospel.

Respect may also be had to the righteousness of his office (and I would not exclude this sense). There has ever been a great contest about the righteousness of the world. The Gentiles pursued it by the light of nature, and the Jews by the works of the law. In this state, the Lord Christ is proposed as the "Lord our righteousness," as the one who was to "bring in," and *had* brought in, "everlasting righteousness," Dan 9.24, which is "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," Rom 10.4. The Gentiles rejected this as folly — Christ crucified was "foolishness" to them; and to the Jews it was a "stumbling-block" [1Cor 1.23] — that which everted [30] the whole law. Generally, they all concluded that he could not save himself; and therefore it was not probable that others would be saved by him. But in this also, the Holy Spirit is the advocate of the church. For in the

dispensation of the word, he so convinces men of the impossibility of attaining a righteousness of their own, that they must either submit to the righteousness of God in Christ, or die in their sins.

(3*dly*.) He "*convinces* the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." [31] Christ himself was judged and condemned by the world. In that judgment, Satan, who is the prince of this world, had the principal hand; for it was effected in the hour and under the power of darkness. No doubt he hoped that he had carried his cause when he prevailed to have the Lord Christ publicly judged and condemned. And the world sought by all means to justify and make good this judgment. But the whole of it is recalled again by the Holy Ghost, pleading it in the cause and for the faith of the church; and he does it so effectively, that the judgment is turned on Satan himself.

Judgment, with unavoidable conviction, was passed on all that superstition, idolatry, and wickedness which Satan had fired the world with. He had borne witness of himself, under various marks, shades, and pretenses, to be "the god of this world," 2Cor 4.4 the supreme ruler over all; and accordingly he was worshipped the world over. But he is now laid open by the gospel and manifested to be an accursed apostate, a murderer, and the great enemy of mankind.

Therefore, taking the name *Paracletus* in this sense of an advocate, it is a proper name for the Holy Ghost in some part of his work in and towards the church. And whenever we are called to bear witness to Christ and the gospel, we abandon our strength and betray our cause if we do not use all means appointed by God to that end, to engage the Spirit in our assistance.

But it is as a *comforter* that he is chiefly promised to us; and by this name, he is expressed as such to the church.

Fourthly, He has a specific work committed to him, suitable to this mission or commission and name, which will appear in the declaration of the particulars in which it consists. For the present, we only assert, in general, that it is his work to support, cherish, relieve, and comfort the church, in all trials and distresses. And this is all that we intend when we say that it is his *office* to do so.

1. *Susception*: the act of taking; reception or acceptance.
2. **Heb 4:14** Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. [15] For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. [16] Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. **Heb 7:25** Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. [26] For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;
3. **Joh 16:7** "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. [8] "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
4. **Act 7:55** But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, [56] and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" [57] Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; [58] and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
5. Originally, "immix ourselves in the niceties of that inquiry."
6. **Joh 17:4** "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. [5] "And now, O Father, glorify Me together

with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.
7. **Joh 7:38** "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." [39] But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
8. *Theandrical*: of a Divine man or God-man (Theos+andro).
9. **Psa 104:30** You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the earth. **Joh 14:26** "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. **Joh 15:26** "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. **Joh 16:7** "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.
10. **1Joh 2:1** My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate [*parakletos* NT:3875] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
11. Hebrew transliteration: פרקלטא.
12. Hebrew הַמְנַחֵם [OT:05162 *nacham*] – the Comforter.
13. ὁ κατήγορος [NT:2723] *o kategoros*.
14. *Propitiation*: the act of placating and overcoming animosity; Christ atoned for our sin to appease God's wrath.
15. One who questions the truth or validity of something; who takes exception to, contradicts, or denies it.
16. Act 24.25 (KJV "trembled"); Act 26.28.
17. *Admire* here means to wonder at or be amazed.

18. **Gal 3:2** This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
19. See the following treatise in this volume. — Ed.
20. ἐλέγξει [NT:1651]; used in Joh 16.8 for *convict.*
21. Ἐλέγχω [NT:1651]; used in Rev 3.19 for *rebuke* or *reprove*.
22. Τὰ δὲ πάντα, ἐλεγχόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ φωτὸς, φανεροῦται.
23. **Joh 3:20** "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be **exposed** (*elegcho*).
24. ἐπιστομίζειν [NT:1993].
25. Ἔλεγχος [NT:1650].
26. **Rom 2:14** for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, [15] who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*).
27. Joh 3.13; 16.16; Eph 4.10.
28. *Converse*: or conversation; to keep company with; to hold intimate intercourse with, or commune with someone.
29. **Act 2:33** "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.
30. *Evert*: to turn inside out.
31. Joh 16.11; that title is also given in Joh 12.31; 14.30; and Eph 2.2.

Chapter II. General properties of the office of a comforter.

General adjuncts or properties of the office of a comforter, as exercised by the Holy Spirit.

To evidence still further the nature of this office and work, we may consider and inquire into the general adjuncts of it, as exercised by the Holy Spirit. And they are four:

First, Infinite condescension. This is among those mysteries of the divine dispensation which we may admire but cannot comprehend; and it is the property of faith alone to act and live upon incomprehensible objects. What reason cannot comprehend it will neglect, as that which it has no concern in, nor can have any benefit by. Faith is most satisfied and cherished with what is infinite and inconceivable, as resting absolutely in divine revelation. Such is this condescension of the Holy Ghost. He is by nature "over all, God blessed forever;" and it is a condescension in the divine excellence to concern itself in a particular manner in any creature whatever. God "humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth,"

Psa 113.5-6; how much more does he do so, in submitting himself to the discharge of an office in behalf of poor worms here below!

This, I confess, is most astonishing, and attended with the most incomprehensible rays of divine wisdom and goodness in the condescension of the Son. For he carried the term of it to the lowest and most abject condition that a rational, intelligent nature is capable of. Thus it is represented by the apostle, Phi 2.6-8. [1] For he not only took our nature into personal union with himself, but became in it, in his outward condition, as a servant — indeed, as a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people;[Psa 22.6] and he became subject to death, the ignominious, shameful death of the cross. Hence, this dispensation of God was filled with infinite wisdom, goodness, and grace. We will rejoice to all eternity in the contemplation of how this exinanition [2] of the Son of God was compensated with the glory that ensued. And then the character of all divine excellencies will be more gloriously conspicuous on this condescension of the Son of God, than they ever were on the works of the whole creation, when this goodly fabric of heaven and earth was brought, by divine power and wisdom, through darkness and confusion, out of nothing.

The condescension of the Holy Spirit to his work and office is not, indeed, of the same kind as to its object. [3] He does not assume our nature; he does not expose himself to the injuries of an outward state and condition; yet it is such that it is more the object of our faith in adoration than of our reason in disquisition. [4] Consider the thing in itself: how one person in the holy Trinity, subsisting in the unity of the same divine nature, would undertake to execute the love and grace of the other persons, and in their names — *what do we understand of it?* This holy economy, in the distinct and subordinate actings of the divine persons in these external works, is only

known to, and is understood only by, themselves. It is our wisdom to acquiesce in express divine revelation. Those who deny these things have scarcely more dangerously erred than those who, by a proud and conceited subtlety of mind, pretend to have a conception of them. They express this in words and terms that, they say, are "precise and accurate." But indeed, they are foolish and curious, whether of other men's coining, or their own discovery. Faith keeps the soul at a holy distance from these infinite depths of the divine wisdom. There it profits more by reverence and holy fear, than any soul can do by its utmost attempt to draw near to that inaccessible light in which these glories of the divine nature dwell.

But we may more steadily consider this condescension with respect to its object. The Holy Spirit thereby becomes a comforter to us poor miserable worms of the earth. And what heart can conceive the glory of this grace? What tongue can express it? Its eminency will especially appear if we consider the ways and means by which he so comforts us, and the opposition from us which he meets with in this. We must treat this afterward.

Secondly, Unspeakable love accompanies the susception and discharge of this office, and that works by tenderness and compassion. The Holy Spirit is said to be the divine, eternal, mutual love of the Father and the Son. I know that great wariness is to be used in declaring these mysteries, and that expressions concerning them are not to be ventured on that are not warranted by the letter of the Scripture. Yet I judge that this notion excellently expresses, if not the distinct manner of subsistence, yet the mutual, internal operation of the persons of the blessed Trinity. For we have no term for, nor notion of, that ineffable complacence and eternal rest which is in this, beyond that of "love." Hence it is said that "God is love," 1Joh

4.8, 16. It does not seem only to be an essential property of the nature of God that the apostle intends, for it is proposed to us as a motive for mutual love among ourselves. And this does not consist simply in the habit or affection of love, but in the actings of it in all its fruits and duties. For *God is love*, such that the internal actings of the holy persons, which are actings in and by the Spirit, are all the ineffable actings of love, in which the nature of the Holy Spirit is expressed to us.

The apostle prays for the presence of the Spirit with the Corinthians under the name of the "God of love and peace," 2Cor 13.11. And the communication of the whole love of God to us is committed to the Spirit; for "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us," Rom 5.5. And hence, the same apostle distinctly mentions the love of the Spirit, conjoining it with all the effects of the mediation of Christ: Rom 15.30, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit." — That is, "I do so on account of the respect you have for Christ, and all that he has done for you, which is an irresistible motive for believers. I also do it for the love of the Spirit: all that love which he acts and communicates to you." Therefore, in all the actings of the Holy Ghost towards us — and especially in this acting of his susception [5] of an office in behalf of the church, which is the foundation of them all — his love is principally to be considered. And he chooses this way of acting and working towards us, to express his unique, personal character, *as* he is the eternal love of the Father and the Son. And among all his actings towards us, which are all acts of love, the most conspicuous are those in which he is a comforter.

Therefore, this is of great use to us as that which ought to have (and will have, if duly apprehended) a great influence on our faith and obedience.

Moreover, it is the spring of all the consolations we receive by and from him. And so we will give a little evidence of it — namely, that the love of the Spirit is principally to be considered in this office and in its discharge. For whatever good we receive from anyone, whatever benefit or present relief we have by it, we can receive no comfort or consolation in it, unless we are persuaded that it proceeds from love. And what does proceed from love, however small, has refreshment and satisfaction in it for every ingenuous [6] nature. It is love alone that is the salt of every kindness or benefit, and which removes from it everything that may be noxious or hurtful. Without an apprehension of this, and satisfaction in it, multiplied beneficial effects will produce no internal satisfaction in those who receive them, nor will they put any real engagement on their minds, Pro 23.6-8. [7] It is therefore of concern to us to secure this ground for all our consolation, in the full assurance of faith that there was infinite love in the susception of this office by the Holy Ghost. And it is evident that it was so —

1. From the nature of the work itself. For the consolation or comforting of any who stand in need of this, is an immediate effect of love, with its inseparable properties of pity and compassion. It must especially be so where no advantage redounds to the comforter, but the whole of what is done respects entirely the good and relief of those who are comforted. For what other affection of mind can be its principle, and from which it may proceed? Persons may be relieved under oppression by justice, and under want by bounty; but to comfort and refresh the minds of any is a particular act of sincere love and compassion. Therefore, this work of the Holy Ghost must be esteemed an act of love. I do not mean only that his love is eminent and discernible in it, but that it proceeds *solely* from love. Without faith in this, we cannot have the benefit of this divine dispensation, nor will any

comforts we receive be firm or stable. But once this is graciously fixed in our minds, there is not one drop of comfort or spiritual refreshment administered by the Holy Ghost, which does not proceed from his infinite love, and which will not then be disposed into that frame of mind which is necessary to comply with him in his operations. And in particular, all the acts in which the discharge of this office consists, are acts of the highest love, of what is infinite, as we will see in considering them.

2. The manner of the performance of this work is so expressed as to evince and expressly demonstrate that it is a work of love. So it is declared where he is promised to the church for this work: Isa 66.13, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem."

The one whom his mother comforts, is supposed to be in some kind of distress. Nor indeed is there distress of any kind that may befall a child whose mother is kind and tender, that she will not be ready to administer to him all the consolation she is able. And how, or in what way, such a mother will discharge this duty, is better conceived than can be expressed. We are not, in natural things, able to conceive of greater love, care, and tenderness, than is in a tender mother who comforts her children in distress. And hereby the prophet graphically represents to our minds the manner by which the Holy Ghost discharges this office towards us. Nor can a child contract greater guilt, or manifest a more depraved habit of mind, than to disregard the affection of a mother endeavoring for its consolation. Such children may sometimes, through the bitterness of their spirits, by their pains and distempers, be surprised into frowardness, [8] and a present disregard of the mother's kindness and compassion, which she knows full well how to bear with. But if they continue to have no sense of it, if it makes no impression

on them, they are of a profligate constitution. And so it may be with believers sometimes. They may disregard divine influences of consolation, by forays into spiritual frowardness, by weakness, by unaccountable despondencies — but the great Comforter will bear with and overcome all these things.

Isa 57.15-19, "Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry: for the spirit would fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry, and struck him: I hid myself, and was angry, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, says the Lord; and I will heal him."

When persons are under sorrows and disconsolations on account of pain and sickness, or the like, though intending to comfort them, it will still be needful sometimes to make use of means and remedies that may be painful and vexatious; and these may be apt to irritate and provoke poor, wayward patients. Yet a mother is not discouraged by this, but proceeds on in her way until the cure is effected and consolation is administered. So God deals with his church by his Spirit. His design is "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa 57.15; and he gives this reason for it: namely, that if he did not act in infinite love and condescension towards them, but dealt with them according to their

deservings, they would be utterly consumed, "the spirit would fail before him, and the souls which he has made," verse 16.

However, in the pursuit of this work, he must use some sharp remedies that were needful for curing their distempers and for their spiritual recovery. Because of their iniquity, "the iniquity of their covetousness," which was the principal disease they labored under, "he was angry and struck them, and hid his face from them," because doing so was necessary to their cure, verse 17. And how do they behave under God's dealing with them? They grow peevish and froward under his hand, choosing to continue in their disease rather than be thus healed by him: "They went on frowardly in the way of their hearts," verse 17. How, therefore, does this Holy Comforter now deal with them? Does he give them up to their frowardness? Does he leave and forsake them under their distemper? No; a tender mother would not deal with her children that way. He manages his work with such infinite love, tenderness, and compassion, that he will overcome all their frowardness, and not cease until he has effectively administered consolation to them: Verse 18, "I have seen," he says, all "his ways," all his frowardness and miscarriages, and yet he says, "I will heal him;" — "I will not, even for all this, be diverted from my work and the pursuit of my design. Before I am done, I will lead him into a right frame, 'and restore comforts to him.' And so that there may be no failure in this, I will do it by a creating act of power:" Verse 19, "I *create* the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace." This is the method of the Holy Ghost in administering consolation to the church, by openly evidencing that love and compassion from which it proceeds. And without this method, no soul would ever be spiritually refreshed under its dejections. For we are apt to behave ourselves frowardly, more or less, under the work of the Holy Ghost towards us. Infinite love and compassion

alone, working by patience and long-suffering, can carry it on to perfection. But if we are not only froward under particular occasions, temptations, and surprisals, clouding our present view of the Holy Spirit in his work, but are also *habitually* careless and negligent about it; if we never labor to attain satisfaction in it, but always indulge the peevishness and frowardness of unbelief; it argues for a most depraved, unthankful frame of heart, in which the soul of God cannot be well pleased.

3. It is evidence that his work proceeds from and is wholly managed in love, that we are cautioned not to grieve him, Eph 4.30. And a double evidence of the greatness of his love in this, is tendered to us in this caution:

(1.) In that only those who act in love towards us, are subject to be grieved by us. If we do not comply with the will and rule of others, they may be provoked, vexed, and instigated to wrath against us; but only those who love us are *grieved* at our miscarriages.

A severe schoolmaster may be more provoked with the fault of his scholar than the father is; but the father is grieved with it when the other is not. Therefore, though the Holy Spirit is not subject or liable to the affection of grief as it is a passion in us, we are cautioned not to grieve him — namely, this is to teach us with what love and compassion, with what tenderness and holy delight, he performs his work in us and towards us.

(2.) His love is so great in that he has undertaken the work of comforting those who are so apt and prone to grieve him, as we are for the most part. The great work of the Lord Christ was to die for us; but what puts an eminence on his love is that he died for us while we were yet his enemies — sinners and ungodly, Rom 5.6-10. And as the work of the Holy Ghost is to comfort us, a luster is put on it by this: that he comforts those who are very prone to grieve him. For although we may not hurt, molest, or grieve

in return those by whom we are grieved, because we have a particular affection for them, who sets himself to *comfort* those who grieve him, when they do so? But the Holy Ghost commends his love to us specifically in this: that even while we grieve him, he recovers us by his consolations, from those ways which grieve him.

This, therefore, is to be fixed as an important principle in this part of the mystery of God: that the principal foundation of the susception of this office of a comforter by the Holy Spirit, is his own unique and ineffable love: for both the efficacy of our consolation, and the life of our obedience, depend on it. For when we know that every acting of the Spirit of God towards us, every gracious impression from him on our understandings, wills, or affections, are done in pursuit of that infinite singular love for which he took upon himself the office of a comforter, they cannot but influence our hearts with spiritual refreshment. And when faith is defective in this matter, so that it does not exercise itself in the consideration of this love of the Holy Ghost, we will never arrive at a solid, abiding, and strong consolation. As for those by whom all these things are despised and derided, it is no difficulty for me whether I should renounce the gospel, or reject them from an interest in Christianity —for the approbation of both is inconsistent. Moreover, it is evident how great a motive arises from this for cheerful, watchful, universal obedience. For all the actings of sin or unbelief in us are, in the first place, reactions to those actings of the Holy Ghost in us and upon us. By sin and unbelief, He is resisted in his persuasions, quenched in his motions, and grieved in himself. If there is any holy ingenuousness in us, it will excite a vigilant diligence not to be overtaken with such wickedness against unspeakable love. The one whose soul is kept under a

sense of the love of the Holy Spirit in this, will walk both safely and fruitfully.

Thirdly, Infinite power is also needful to, and accordingly evident in, the discharge of this office. We have fixed that the Holy Ghost is, and ever was, the comforter of the church. Whatever is therefore said of this, belongs uniquely to him. It is expressed as proceeding from and accompanied with infinite power. And also, considering the persons and things, it is necessary that it should be so. Thus we have the church's complaint in a deep disconsolation:

"My way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God," Isa 40.27.

It is not so much her affliction and miseries which cause her dejection, as an apprehension that God does not regard her in this. And when this is added to any pressing trouble, whether internal or external, it fully constitutes a state of spiritual disconsolation. For when faith can take a prospect of the love, care, and concern of God in us and our condition, however grievous things may be to us at present, we cannot be comfortless. And what is it, in the consolation which God intends for his church, that he would have them consider in him, as an assured ground of relief and refreshment? He declares it himself in the verses which follow it:

Isa 40.28-31, "Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint, nor is weary?" etc. [9]

The church does not at all seem to doubt His power, but it doubts His love, care, and faithfulness towards her. But it is his infinite power that he chooses first to satisfy her in, as that which all his actings towards her were founded in and resolved into. Without a due consideration of this, all that

otherwise could be expected would not yield her relief. And this being fixed on their minds, he next proposes to them his infinite understanding and wisdom:

"There is no searching of his understanding."

Conceive rightly of his infinite power, and then leave things to his sovereign, unsearchable wisdom for their management, as to the ways degrees, times and seasons. Apprehending a lack of love and care in God towards them, was what immediately caused their disconsolation; but the ground of it was in their unbelief of his infinite power and wisdom. Therefore, in the work of the Holy Ghost for comforting the church, his infinite power is to be specifically considered. So the apostle proposes it to the weakest believers for their support, and as what would assure them of the victory in their conflict, that "greater is he that is in them than he that is in the world," 1Joh 4.4.

That Holy Spirit which is bestowed on them and dwells in them is greater, abler, and more powerful, than Satan who attempts their ruin in and by the world, seeing that the Spirit has omnipotent power. Thoughts of our disconsolation arise from the impressions that Satan makes upon our minds and consciences by sin, temptation, and persecution. For we do not find in ourselves such an ability to resist that we may have from it an assurance of a conquest. The apostle says in essence, "You are to expect this from the power of the Holy Spirit, which is infinitely above whatever Satan has to oppose you, or to bring any disconsolation on you. This will cast out all that fear which has torment accompanying it." This may be disregarded by those who are filled with an apprehension of their own self-sufficiency as to all the ends of living and being obedient to God. They likewise apprehend that they have a never-failing spring of rational considerations about these,

which are able to administer all necessary relief and comfort to them at all times. But those who are really sensible of their own condition, and that of other believers — if they understand what it means to be comforted with the "consolations of God," and how remote they are from those delusions which men embrace under the name of their "rational considerations" — will grant that faith in God's infinite power is requisite to any solid spiritual comfort: for —

1. Who can declare the dejections, sorrows, fears, despondencies, and discouragements that believers are liable to, in the great variety of their natures, causes, effects, and occasions? What relief can be suited to them except what emanates from infinite power? Indeed, such is the spiritual frame and constitution of their souls, that they will often reject all means of comfort that are not communicated by an almighty efficacy. Hence God "creates the fruit of the lips, Peace, peace," Isa 57.19. He produces peace in the souls of men by a creating act of his power. And he directs us, in the passage mentioned before, to look for it only from the infinite excellence of his nature. None was therefore fit for this work of being the church's comforter, except the Spirit of God alone. He alone, by his almighty power, can remove all their fears, and support them under all their dejections, in all that variety with which they are tempted and exercised. Nothing but omnipotence itself is suited to obviate those innumerable disconsolations that we are liable to. And those whose souls are pressed in earnest with them, and are driven from all the reliefs which not only carnal security and stout-heartedness in adversity offer, but also from all those lawful diversions which the world can administer, will understand that true consolation is an act of the exceeding greatness of the power of God, without which it will not be worked.

2. The means and causes of their disconsolation direct them to the same spring of their comfort. Whatever the power of hell, sin, and the world can effect, separately or in conjunction, it is all levelled against the peace and comfort of believers.

It would require great enlargement of this discourse to declare how great a force and efficacy these means and causes are in their attempts to disturb and ruin believers, and by what various ways and means they work to that end. And yet, after we had used our utmost diligence in an inquiry about them, we would come short of a full investigation; indeed, perhaps short of what many individuals find in their own experience. Therefore, with respect to one cause and principle of disconsolation, God declares that he is the one who comforts his people:

Isa 51.12-15, "I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of man who will be made like grass? And do you forget the Lord your maker, who has stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? And have you feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the Lord your God, who divided the sea, whose waves roared: The Lord of hosts is his name."

God sees it necessary to declare his infinite power, and to express its effects in various instances.

Therefore, if we take a view of what the state and condition of the church is, in itself and in the world— how weak the faith of most believers is; how great are their fears; how many are their discouragements; how great are the temptations, calamities, oppositions, and persecutions they are exercised

with; how vigorously and sharply these things are set upon their spirits, according to all the advantages, inward and outward, that their spiritual adversaries can lay hold of — then it will be manifest how necessary it was that their consolation be entrusted to Him with whom infinite power always dwells. And if our own inward or outward peace seems to abate about the necessity of this consideration, it may not be amiss, by the exercise of faith in this, to lay in provision for the future, seeing that we do not know what may befall us in the world. And if we live to see the church in storms (and who knows but that we may), our principal support will be that our Comforter is of almighty power, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in operation.

Fourthly, This dispensation of the Spirit is unchangeable. To whomever he is given as a comforter, he abides with them forever. Our Savior expressly declares this in the first promise he made of sending him as a comforter, in a particular manner: Joh 14.16, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever." The moment of this promise lies in his unchangeable continuance with the church.

There, indeed, was a present occasion necessitating this declaration of the unchangeableness of his abode. For in this entire discourse, our Savior was preparing the hearts of his disciples for his departure from them, which was now at hand. And because the whole of the relief he would afford them in this case, is laid upon his sending the Holy Ghost, he takes care not only to prevent an objection which might arise in their minds about this dispensation of the Spirit, but in doing so, he also secures the faith and consolation of the church in all ages. For he himself had been their immediate, visible comforter during the whole time of his ministry among

them. But he was now departing, and "the heaven was to receive him until the times of restitution of all things." And so they might be apt to fear that this comforter who was now promised to them, might also continue only for a season, by which they would be reduced to a new loss and sorrow. To assure their minds in this, our Lord Jesus Christ lets them know that this other comforter would not only always continue with *them* to the end of their lives, work, and ministry, but he would absolutely abide with the *church* to the consummation of all things. The Spirit is now given in an eternal and unchangeable covenant, Isa 59.21. [10] He can no more depart from the church, than the everlasting and sure covenant of God can be abolished.

It may be objected by those who really inquire into the promises of Christ to send the Spirit, and after the accomplishment of these promises, for the establishment of their faith,

Why is it, that if the Comforter always abides with the church, so great a number of believers in all ages, who spend maybe the greatest part of their lives in troubles and disconsolation, have no experience of the presence of the Holy Ghost with them as a comforter?

But this objection has no force to weaken our faith as to the accomplishment of this promise; for,

1. In the promise itself, there is a supposition of troubles and disconsolations to befall the church in all ages; for the Comforter is promised to be sent with respect to those. And it is but a dream for those who fancy such a state of the church in this world, that it would be accompanied with such an assurance of all inward and outward satisfaction that it scarcely stands in need of this office or work of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the promise of his abiding with us forever as a comforter is an

infallible *prediction* that believers in all ages will meet with troubles, sorrows, and disconsolation.

2. The accomplishment of Christ's promise, as to its truth, does not depend on our experience, or at least not on what men sensibly feel in themselves under their distresses, much less on what they express with some mixture of unbelief. So we observed before, in that passage of the prophet concerning the church, Isa 40.27, that "her way was hidden from the Lord, and her judgment was passed over by her God." And she also complained, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me," Isa 49.14.

Yet in both places, God convinces her of her mistake, and that indeed her complaint was only a fruit of unbelief. And so it is usual in great distresses, when individuals are so swallowed up with sorrow or overwhelmed with anguish, that they are not sensible of the work of the Holy Ghost in their consolation.

3. He is a comforter to all believers at all times, and on all occasions in which they really stand in need of spiritual consolation. Yet if we intend to experience his work in this, to have the advantage of it or benefit by it, there are various things required of us in a way of duty. If we are negligent in this, it is no wonder if we are at a loss for those comforts which he is willing to administer. Unless we understand rightly the nature of spiritual consolations, and value them both as sufficient and satisfactory, we are not likely to enjoy them, or at least not to be made sensible of them. Many under their troubles suppose there is no comfort except in removing them; and they know of no relief in their sorrows except in taking away the cause of them. At best, they value any outward relief above any internal supports and refreshments. Such persons can never receive the consolation of the

Holy Spirit with any refreshing experience. To look for all our comforts from him; to value those things in which his consolations consist, above all earthly enjoyments; to wait upon him in the use of all means for receiving his influences of love and grace; to be fervent in prayer for his presence with us and the manifestation of his grace — these are required in all those towards whom he discharges this office. And while we are found in these ways of holy obedience and dependence, we will find him a comforter, and that will be forever.

These things are generally observable in the office of the Holy Ghost as he is the comforter of the church, and in the manner of his discharge of that office. What is further to be considered to guide our faith, and to participate in consolation with respect to this, will be evident in the declaration of the particulars that belong to it.

1. **Phi 2:6** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

2. *Exinanition*: self-emptying, Phi 2.7; ἐκένωσε [NT:2758 *ekenoose*], "made himself of no reputation."

3. *terminus ad quem.*

4. *Disquisition*: an elaborate analysis.

5. *Susception*: the act of taking; reception or acceptance.

6. That is, for everyone who has an ingenuous nature, or is childlike, open, and generous.

7. [NLT] **Pro 23:6** Don't eat with people who are stingy; don't desire their delicacies. [7] They are always thinking about how much it costs. "Eat and drink," they say, but they don't mean it. [8] You will throw up what little you've eaten, and your compliments will be wasted.

8. *Froward*: headstrong and rebellious.

9. **Isa 40:28** Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. [29] He gives power to the weak, And to *those who have* no might He increases strength. [30] Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, [31] But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

10. **Isa 59:21** "As for Me," says the LORD, "this *is* My covenant with them: My Spirit who *is* upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."

Chapter III. To whom the Holy Spirit is promised and given as a comforter

Or the *object* of his acting in this office.

We have considered the promise of Christ to send the Holy Spirit to be the comforter of the church, and to that end, to abide with them forever. The general nature of the office and work he undertakes and discharges upon this promise, with their properties, has also been declared.

Our next inquiry is to whom this promise is made, and towards whom it is infallibly fulfilled. It has been already declared in our former discourses, [1] how and to what ends the Holy Spirit, as to his effects and operations, is promised to any persons, and received by them, and in what order. Therefore, here we will only declare in particular whom he is promised to and received by as a comforter — and this is to all, and only, actual believers. All his operations required for making them believers, are antecedent to this; for the promise of him to this end, wherever it is recorded, is made directly to them, and it is confined to them. It was given immediately to the apostles, but it was not given to them *as apostles*, but *as believers* and disciples of Christ. And that was with a particular respect to

the difficulties and causes of disconsolation which they were under, or would meet with on account of their being believers. See the promises made expressly to this purpose, in Joh 14.16, 17, 26; 15.26; 16.7-8. And it is also declared that the world — which is opposed to those who believe — *cannot* receive him, Joh 14.17. He has other effectual operations on the world, for their conviction and the conversion of many of them. But as a Spirit of consolation, he is neither promised to them, nor can they receive him, until other gracious acts of His have passed on their souls. Besides, we will see that all his actings and effects as a comforter are confined to those who believe; and all his actings presuppose saving faith.

This is the great fundamental privilege of true believers, by which, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, they are exalted above all other persons in this world. And this will more evidently appear when we consider those special operations, acts, and effects, by which consolation is administered to them. The life of man is the subject of innumerable troubles; this is made evident and uncontrollable by catholic experience. That "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," has been the constant acknowledgment of all who have been wise, in all ages. And those who have tried to drown their sense of them in security and sensuality of life, have always been looked at as greatly ignorant of the principles of nature and dictates of reason, voluntarily degenerating into the condition of brutish and irrational creatures. Others, who will not forego the privilege of their being, have always made it a principal inquiry into how or why they might take and receive relief and comfort for their support against their unavoidable troubles, sorrows, and disconsolation; indeed, it is natural and necessary for all men to do so.

All men cannot help but seek rest and peace, not only out of choice, but out of an instinct of nature. For trouble and sorrow are diametrically contrary to it in its being, and tend to its dissolution. Therefore, all men naturally seek consolation: Hence the best and most useful part of the old philosophy, consisted in prescribing the ways and means of comforting and supporting the minds of men against things that are noxious and grievous to their nature, along with the sorrows which ensue from that. And the topics they had found for this purpose were not to be despised where men are destitute of spiritual light and supernatural revelation. Nor did the wisdom or reason of man ever rise to anything more useful in this world than to discover any rational considerations that might allay the sorrows or relieve the minds of those who are disconsolate. For things that are really grievous to most of mankind, outweigh all the real satisfaction which this life and world can afford; and it is brutish to place either satisfaction or relief in the pursuit of sensual lusts. Yet what did all the springs and well-heads of rational and philosophical consolation rise to? What refreshment did their streams afford? The utmost they attained was only to confirm and make obstinate the minds of men in a fancy, in an opinion or persuasion, that is contrary to what they felt and had experienced. For what they contended for was only this: that the consideration of the common lot of mankind, the unavoidableness of grievous accidents, the shortness of human life, the true exercise of reason upon more noble objects, with other things of like nature, should satisfy men that the things which they endured were not so evil or grievous.

But what does all that amount to in comparison to this privilege of believers, of this provision made for them in all their disconsolations, by the One in whom they believe? This is a relief that never entered into the heart

of man to think of or conceive. Nor can it be understood by any but those by whom it is enjoyed. For the world, as our Savior testifies, neither knows this Spirit nor can it receive him; — and therefore, what is spoken of him and his work is looked at as a fancy or the shadow of a dream. Although the Sun of Righteousness is risen in this matter, and shines on all who dwell in the land of Goshen, [2] yet those who still abide in Egypt make use only of their lanterns. But those who are really partakers of this privilege know in some measure what they enjoy, even though they are not able to comprehend it in its excellence, nor value it in a due manner. For how can the heart of man, or our poor weak understandings, fully conceive this glorious mystery of sending the Holy Ghost to be our comforter? Only believers receive it by faith, and experience it in its effects.

In my judgment, there is an unspeakable privilege for those who are believers, antecedent to their believing, and as they are elect — namely, that Christ died in their stead alone. But this is like the wells which Isaac's servants dug, that the Philistines strove about as those which belonged to them, which though they were fresh and useful springs in themselves, caused them to be called *Esek* and *Sitnah* (that is, "contention" and "hatred").[Gen 26.20,21] There are mighty strivings to break down the enclosure of this privilege, and lay it common to the whole world. This is, indeed, a waste and useless. For it is contended that the Lord Christ died equally for all and every one of mankind, for believers and unbelievers, for those who are saved and those who are damned. And to this purpose, many pretenses are pleaded to show how most of those for whom Christ died have no real benefit by his death, nor is anything required in them to evidence that they have an interest in it. But this privilege we now address is like the well *Rehoboth* (that is, "room"). Isaac kept it to himself, and the Philistines did

not strive about it. None contend that the Spirit is a comforter to any but believers; therefore. it is despised and reproached by the world — because they have no interest in it, nor do they have the least pretense to strive about it. If believers, therefore, duly considered how they are advanced by it through the love and care of Jesus Christ, into an inexpressible dignity above the residue of mankind, they would rejoice in it more than in all that this world can supply them with. But we must proceed.

It appears, from what has been discussed, that this is not the first saving work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men. Regeneration and habitual sanctification always precede it. He comforts none but those whom he has previously sanctified. Nor are any others capable of his consolations; there is nothing in others that can discern his acting, nor value what he does of this kind. And this is the true reason why the whole work of the Holy Spirit as a comforter — which consists in the accomplishment of the most glorious promise that ever Christ made to his church, and the greatest evidence of his continued care of it — is so neglected, indeed, despised, among most professed Christians. *This is a great evidence of the apostatized state of Christianity*. They can have no concern in any work of his except in its proper order. If men are not first sanctified by him, they can never be comforted by him; and they will prefer in their troubles, any natural reliefs before the best and highest of his consolations. For however these may be proposed to them — however they may be instructed in their nature, ways, and means — they do not belong to them; and why should they value what is not theirs? The world cannot receive him. The Spirit works on the world for *conviction*, Joh 16.8, [3] and He works on the elect for their *conversion*, Joh 3.8; [4] but none can receive him as a comforter, except *believers*. [5]

Therefore, this whole work of the Holy Spirit is little taken notice of by most, and it is despised by many. Yet it is nevertheless glorious in itself, being fully declared in the Scripture; and it is no less useful to the church, being testified to by the experience of those who truly believe.

What remains for the full declaration of this office and work of the Holy Ghost, is the consideration of those acts of his which properly belong to this, and those privileges which believers are thereby made partakers of. And though many blessed mysteries of evangelical truth are contained in this, they would require much time and diligence in their explanation. But for most of them, according to the measure of light and experience which I have attained, I have kept myself from handling them here. For I have already spoken about most of them in two other discourses: the one concerning the *Perseverance of True Believers*,[6] and the other of our *Communion with God*,[7] and *Of the Holy Spirit* in particular. Therefore, because I will be sparing in the repetition of what has already been proposed to public view, I will not add much to this. Yet what is necessary for our present design must not be wholly omitted, especially seeing that I find further light and evidence may be added to our former endeavors in this kind.

1. Part I - book iv. chap. iii.
2. A metaphor for living in a protected place, preserved from the wrath of God: **Exo 8:22** "And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms *of flies* shall be there, in order that you may know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the land. **Exo 9:26** Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.
3. **Joh 16:8** "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
4. **Joh 3:8** "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
5. **Act 2:38** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
6. Vol. xi. of the author's works. — Ed.
7. Vol. ii. — Ed.

Chapter IV. Inhabitation of the Spirit is the first thing promised.

The first thing which the Comforter is promised for to believers, is that he will dwell in them; this is their great fundamental privilege, and all others depend on it. This must therefore be inquired into in the first place.

The inhabitation of the Spirit in believers is among those things which we ought to firmly believe as to the nature or being of it; but we cannot fully conceive of it as to its manner. Nor can this be the least impeachment of its truth to any who assent to the gospel, in which we have various things proposed as objects of our faith, which our reason cannot comprehend. We will therefore assert to no more in this matter than what the Scripture directly and expressly goes before us in. And where we have the express letter of the Scripture for our warrant, we are eternally safe, so long as we affix no sense to it that is absolutely repugnant to reason or contrary to more plain testimonies in other places. Therefore, to make plain what we intend in this, the ensuing observations must be premised.

First. This personal inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in believers is distinct and different from his essential omnipresence, by which he is in all things.

Omnipresence is essential; inhabitation is personal. Omnipresence is a necessary property of his nature, and so it is not of him as a distinct person in the Trinity, but as God essentially — He is one and the same in being and substance with the Father and the Son. To be everywhere, to fill all things, to be present with them or indistant from them, always equally existing in the power of an infinite being, is an inseparable property of the divine nature as such. But this inhabitation is *personal*, or what belongs to him distinctly *as* the Holy Ghost. Besides, it is voluntary and it might not have been; which is why it is the subject of a free promise of God, and wholly depends on a free act of the will of the Holy Spirit himself.

Secondly. What is intended is not a presence by virtue of a metonymical designation, or an expression of the cause for the effect. The meaning of this promise, "The Spirit will dwell in you," is not "He will work graciously in you," for he can do this without any special presence. Being essentially everywhere, he can work where and how he pleases without any special presence. But it is the Spirit himself that is promised, and his presence in an especial manner, and an especial manner of that presence: "He will be in you, and dwell in you," as we will see. [1] The only inquiry in this matter is whether the Holy Spirit himself is promised to believers, or only his grace, which we will immediately inquire into.

Thirdly. The dwelling of the person of the Holy Spirit in believers, whatever its nature is, does not effect a personal union between them. What we call a "personal union" is the union of diverse natures in the same person; and there can be only one person by virtue of this union. Such is the hypostatic union in the person of the Son of God. It was our *nature* he assumed, and not the *person* of anyone. It was impossible that he would assume any more than in one individual instance; for if he could have

assumed another individual being of our nature, then it must differ personally from what he assumed; for there is nothing that makes one man differ from another but a distinct personal subsistence of each. And it implies the highest contradiction that the Son of God could be hypostatically united to more than one. For if they are more than one, they must be more persons than one; and many persons cannot be hypostatically united — for that means to be *one* person, and no more. There may be a manifold union, mystical and moral, of diverse and many *persons*; but there cannot be a personal union of anything but distinct *natures*.

Just as the Son of God could not assume many persons, so too, supposing that the human nature which he united to himself was a "person" — that is, that it had a distinct subsistence of its own, antecedent to its union — there could have been no personal union between it and the Son of God; for the Son of God was a distinct person. And if the human nature had been a distinct person too, there would still have been two persons, and so no personal *union*. Nor can it be said that although the human nature of Christ was a person in itself, it ceased to be so upon its union with the divine, and so two persons were conjoined and compounded into one. For if ever human nature has in any instance a personal subsistence of its own, it cannot be separated from it without the destruction and annihilation of the individual. To suppose otherwise is to make it continue as what it was, and *not* what it was— for it is what it is, distinct from all other individuals, by virtue of its personality. Therefore, upon this inhabitation of the Spirit, whatever it consists of, there is no personal union ensuing between him and believers, nor is it possible that any such thing could be. For he and they are distinct *persons*, and while their natures are distinct, they must eternally abide so. It is only the assumption of our nature into union with the Son of

God, antecedent to any individual personal subsistence of its own, that can constitute such a union.

Fourthly. The union and relation that ensues from this inhabitation of the Spirit is not immediate between *Him* and believers, but between them and *Jesus Christ*. For he is sent to dwell in them by Christ, in his name, as his Spirit, to stand in his place in love and grace towards them, making use of Christ's things in all his effects and operations, to his glory. From this, I say, comes the union of believers with Christ *by* the Spirit, and not *with* the Spirit himself. For this Holy Spirit dwelling in the human nature of Christ, manifesting and acting himself in all fullness, as declared, being sent by Christ to dwell in like manner and act in a limited measure in all believers — there is a mystical union arising between them, of which the Spirit is the bond and vital principle.

On these considerations, I say, it is the *person* of the Holy Ghost that is promised to believers, and not only the effects of his grace and power; and it is his *person* that always dwells in them. On the one hand, this is an argument for his infinite condescension in complying with this part of his office and work: to be sent by the Father and Son to dwell in believers. So too, it is an evident demonstration of his eternal deity: that one and the self-same person should, at the same time, inhabit so many thousands of distinct persons who are or were, at any time, believers in the world — it is foolish to imagine that this concerns anyone who is not absolutely infinite. And therefore, what some oppose as unfit for him, and beneath his glory — namely, his inhabitation in the saints of God — is a most illustrious and uncontrollable demonstration of his eternal glory.

For none but the one who is absolutely immense in his nature and omnipresence, can be present with and indistant from all believers in the

world; and none but the one whose *person* is infinite, by virtue of his *nature*, can personally and equally inhabit them all. An infinite nature and person is required for this. And in considering the incomprehensibility of this, we are to acquiesce as to the *manner* of his inhabitation, which we cannot conceive of.

1. There are very many promises in the Old Testament that God would thus give the Holy Spirit in and by virtue of the new covenant, such as Eze 36.27, Isa 59.21, Pro 1.23. [2] And in every place, God calls this the *promised* Spirit, and as promised, *His* Spirit, "My Spirit;" which precisely denotes the person of the Spirit himself. It is generally apprehended (and I confess) that in these promises, the Holy Spirit is intended only as to his gracious effects and operations, and not as to any personal inhabitation. I will not contend much about these promises, except that in some of them, his person, as promised, is expressly distinguished from all his gracious effects. But the exposition given about them in their accomplishment under the New Testament, will not allow us to judge them this way; for —

2. We are directed to *pray for the Holy Spirit*, and assured that God will give him to those who ask for him in a due manner, Luk 11.13. [3] If these words must be expounded metonymically, [4] and not properly, it must be because either —

(1.) They do not agree in the letter with other testimonies of Scripture; or,

(2.) They contain some sense that is absurd and unreasonable; or,

(3.) It is contrary to the experience of those who believe.

The first cannot be said, for countless other testimonies concur with it; nor can the second, as we will show; and as for the third, we will prove its contrary. What is it that believers intend in their request for the Spirit? I suppose I may say that there is no single petition in which they are more

intense and earnest, nor which they more frequently insist upon. As David prayed that "God would not take his Holy Spirit from him," Psa 51.11, so they pray that God would bestow his Spirit on them; for they ought to do this even after they have received him. His continuance with him, his evidencing and manifesting himself in and to them, are the design of their continual supplications for him. Is it merely external operations of the Spirit in grace that they desire in this? Do they not always pray for his ineffable presence and inhabitation? Will any thoughts of grace or mercy relieve or satisfy them once they apprehend that the Holy Spirit is not in them, or does not dwell with them? Even though they are not able to form any conception in their minds of the manner of his presence and residence in them, yet it is what they pray for.

And without the apprehension of this by faith, they can have neither peace nor consolation. This promise being is confined to believers — those who are truly and really so, as we showed before — it is their experience by which its accomplishment is to be judged, and not the presumption of those by whom both the Spirit himself and his whole work is despised.

3. This inhabitation is what our Lord Jesus Christ principally directs his disciples to expect in the promise of the Spirit: "He dwells with you, and will be in you," Joh 14.17. The one who so dwells is the "Comforter;" or as it is emphatically expressed in Joh 16.13, "The Spirit of truth." He is promised to and he inhabits those who believe. So it is expressly affirmed towards all who are partakers of this promise: Rom 8.9, "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." Rom 8.11, "If the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you." "The Holy Spirit dwells in us," 2Tim 1.14. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," 1Joh 4.4. And there are many other express testimonies

to the same purpose. The subject of these promises and propositions is the Holy Ghost himself, the *person* of the Holy Ghost — and that is so expressed as not to leave any pretense that it means anything else, or that it is not his person. And nothing is ascribed to him that is unreasonable, or inconvenient to him in the discharge of his office, or inconsistent with any of his divine perfections. Rather, all of it is in every way suitable to his work, and evidently demonstrative of his divine nature and subsistence. Therefore, it is both irrational and unsuitable for the economy of divine grace, to twist these expressions to a lower, simpler, and figurative meaning. I am persuaded that it is contrary to the faith of the catholic church of true believers to do so. Some of them may not have exercised their minds about the manner of the abode of the Holy Spirit with the church. And some of them, when they hear of his personal indwelling, in which they have not been duly instructed, may indeed fear that what they cannot comprehend, cannot be, and that some evil consequences may ensue from admitting it, even though they cannot say what these consequences are. Yet with them all, it is even an article of faith that the "Holy Ghost dwells in the church," — that is, in those who truly believe — and in this, they apprehend such a personal presence of his, as they cannot conceive. Therefore, this being so expressly and so frequently affirmed in the Scripture, and the comfort of the church, which depends on it, being singular and eminent, it is for me an important article of evangelical truth.

4. Although all the principal actings of the Holy Spirit in us and towards us as a comforter, depend on this head, or flow from this spring of his inhabitation, yet in the confirmation of its truth, I will here name one or two actings by which it is evidenced, and its benefits to the church declared:

(1.) This is the spring of his gracious operations in us. So our Savior himself declares: "The water that I give him will be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," Joh 4.14. The water promised here is the Holy Spirit, called the "gift of God," verse 10. This is evident from the parallel passage, Joh 7.38-39, [5] where this living water is plainly declared to be the Holy Ghost. And this water which is given to anyone, is to be *in him*, and to *abide* there; this is but a metaphorical expression for the *inhabitation of the Spirit*. For it is to be in him as a *well*, as a *living fountain*, which cannot be spoken of any gracious habit whatsoever. No quality in our minds can be a *spring of living water*. Besides, all gracious habits are effects of the operation of the Holy Spirit; and therefore they are not the *well* itself, but belong to its springing up in living water. So the Spirit in his *indwelling* is distinguished from all his *evangelical operations* of grace, just as the well is distinct from the streams that flow from it. And just as it is natural and easy for a spring of living water to *bubble up* and put out refreshing streams, so it belongs to the consolation of believers to know how easy it is for the Holy Spirit, how ready he is on account of his gracious inhabitation, to carry on and perfect the work of grace, holiness, and sanctification in them. Whatever instruction they may take for their own deportment towards him, may be addressed afterwards. So in many other places, his presence with us (which we proved to be by gracious inhabitation) is proposed as the cause and spring of all his gracious operations; and so it is distinct from them. So, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us," Rom 5.5; "The Spirit of God that dwells in you will quicken your mortal bodies," Rom 8.11; "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom 8.16. These passages have been explained and vindicated elsewhere.

(2.) This is the hidden spring and cause of that *inexpressible distance and difference* that exists between believers and the rest of the world. Our apostle tells us that the "life" of believers is "hid with Christ in God," Col 3.3. They have a blessed life while they are here, dead to the world — and as dead in the world, it is a life that will issue in eternal glory! But no such thing appears, no luster of it is cast abroad into the eyes of men. "True," says the apostle, "for it is 'hid with Christ in God.'" It is hidden in its causes, nature, operations, and means of preservation.

But it is by this hidden life that they are differenced from the perishing world. And it will not be denied, I suppose, that this difference is real and great. For those who believe, enjoy the special love and favor of God; but those who do not, are "under the curse," Gal 3.10 and "the wrath of God abides on them." Joh 3.36 Believers are "alive to God," Rom 6.11 but others are "dead in trespasses and sins." Eph 2.1 If men will not believe that there is so inexpressible a difference between them in this world, then they will be forced to confess it at the last day, when the decretory[6] sentences of, "Come, you blessed," Mat 25.34 and "Go, you cursed," Mat 25.41 will be openly denounced.

But, for the most part, there is no visible cause in the eyes of the world, of this inexpressible and eternal difference between these two sorts of persons. Besides that, for the most part, the world judges amiss about all that believers are and do. And through an inbred enmity, working by wicked and foolish surmises, it supposes they are the worst rather than absolutely the best of men. And for the most part, there is not such a visible and manifest difference between them in outward actions and duties (on which alone a judgment may be passed in man's day) as to be a just foundation for believing there is so unspeakable a difference as spoken of. There is a

difference in their works, which indeed ought to be far greater than it is; and so a greater testimony is given to the righteousness of God,1Joh 3.12. [7] There is yet a greater difference in internal, habitual grace, by which the minds of believers are transformed initially into the image of God, Tit 1.15. [8] But these things will not bear the weight of this inconceivable distance.

Principally, therefore, it depends on this: — namely, the inhabitation of the Spirit in those who believe. The great difference between the two houses that Solomon built, was that God dwelt in the one, and Solomon dwelt in the other. Though any two houses, as to their outward fabric, have the same appearance, if the king dwells in the one and a robber dwells in the other, the one may be a palace and the other a den [of thieves]. It is this inhabitation of the Spirit on which immediately depend all the privileges of believers, and all the advantages which they have above the men of the world. And the difference which is made by this, or which ensues from this, is so inconceivably great, that a sufficient reason may be given from this, for all the excellent things which are spoken about those who are partakers of it.

1. **Joh 14:17** "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.
2. **Eze 36:27** "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. **Isa 59:21** "As for Me," says the LORD, "this *is* My covenant with them: My Spirit who *is* upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore." **Pro 1:23** Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.
3. **Luk 11:13** "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"
4. Using the name of one thing for that of another that it is closely associated with. For example, saying "he spent the evening reading Shakespeare" is metonymic, because it substitutes the author for the author's works.
5. **Joh 7:38** "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." [39] But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
6. *Decretory*: pertaining to an authoritative decree or final judgement.
7. **1Joh 3:12** not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his

brother's righteous.

8. **Tit 1:15** To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

Chapter V. How the Holy Spirit acts as an Unction

Particular actings of the Holy Spirit as a comforter — how he is an unction.

The special actings of the Holy Spirit towards believers as their comforter, with the privileges and advantages they are made partakers of by these actings, have been severally spoken to by many. And I have also had occasion to address some of them in other discourses. I will therefore be brief in the present discourse about them. And waiving things that are commonly known and received, I will endeavor to state right conceptions of them, and to add further light to what has already been received.

The First of this sort [1] which we will mention, because I think it is the first in order of nature, is the *unction* or *anointing* which believers have by the Spirit. So they are said to be "anointed," 2Cor 1.21. And 1Joh 2.20, "You have *tó chrisma*, [2] " an unction, an unguent, "from the Holy One." Verse 27, "The anointing which you have received abides in you;" and "the same anointing teaches you about all things." We must inquire, in the first place, what this *chrisma* is which we receive, and what this anointing consists in.

For our duty and advantage is to have a distinct comprehension and knowledge of what is so great a privilege, and of so much use to us. It is more so, because these things are neglected by most. That which has in itself the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, is an empty sound to them. There are some things which pretend to this unction, or which some would have it consist in, that we must remove from our way, to render the truth more evident.

First. Some think this "unction" intends the doctrine of the gospel, or the truth itself. Episcopius pleads for this in his exposition of 1Joh 2.20-27. [3] He said the doctrine of the gospel which they had received, would preserve them from the seducers whom the apostle warned believers to beware of in that passage. [4] But neither the context nor the text will allow this interpretation; for —

1. The thing itself in question, was the doctrine of the gospel. The seducers pretended this was on their side, which the apostle denies. Now, although the doctrine itself was that by which this difference was to be determined, it is not the doctrine itself, but the advantage they had in rightly *understanding* it, which is proposed as their relief and comfort.

2. This unction is said to "abide" in those who have received it — because *we* are said to abide in the doctrine or the truth, not that the truth abides in *us*, properly speaking.

3. This unction is said to "teach us all things;" but the doctrine of the truth is what we are taught, and there must be a difference between what teaches, and what is taught by it.

4. In all other places of the Scripture, either the Holy Ghost himself or some special operation of his is intended by this. Thus there is no reason

nor anyone's pretense to be taken from the words or context, why another meaning should be imposed on that expression here.

5. The reason which he adds — that "there is no mention in any other place of Scripture of any particular internal act or work towards any persons, in their teaching or reception of the truth" —is so extremely remote from the truth, and is so directly opposite to express testimonies that are almost countless, that I wonder how any man could be so forgetful as to affirm it. Let the reader satisfy himself in what has been discussed on the topic of spiritual illumination.

Secondly. Some claim that the testimony given by the Holy Ghost to the truth of the gospel that was mparted to them, is "the exposition of this unction," in the paraphrase of another. This testimony, they say, was by his miraculous operations at his first effusion on the apostles. But neither can this be the mind of the Holy Ghost in this. For this unction which believers had, is the same as their being anointed by God, 2Cor 1.21; [5] and that was a privilege of which they were all personally made partakers. So too is that which is mentioned here — namely, that which was "in them," which "abode with them," and "taught them." [6] Nor would it be a tolerable exposition of these words — "You have an unction from the Holy One, abiding in you, teaching you" — to say that it means, "You have heard of the miraculous operations of the Holy Ghost, in the confirmation of the gospel, giving testimony to the truth."

Thirdly. It is to no purpose to examine the pretenses of some of the Romanists, that this refers to the *chrism* or unguent that they use in baptism, confirmation, and in their fictitious sacraments of order and extreme unction. For besides all their unctions being inventions of their own, and not an institution of Christ, nor of any efficacy to the ends for which this

unction is granted to believers, the more sober of their expositors take no notice of them in this respect. Those who want to know what respect they do have, may find it in the commentaries of Cornelius a Lapide on this passage. [7]

These apprehensions being removed as in no way suiting the mind of the Holy Ghost, nor expressing the privilege intended, nor the advantage we have by it, we will follow the conduct of the Scripture in the investigation of the true nature of it. And to this end we may observe,

1. That all persons and things that were dedicated or consecrated to God under the Old Testament, were anointed with material oil. So were the kings of the people of God; so were priests and prophets. In like manner, the sanctuary, the altar, and all the holy utensils of divine worship, were anointed. And it is confessed that among all the rest of the Mosaic institutions, those which also concerned unction, were typical and figurative of what was to come.

2. That all these types had their first, proper, and full meaning and accomplishment in the person of Jesus Christ. And because every person and thing that was made holy to God was so anointed, the one who was to be the "Most Holy," the only spring and cause of holiness in and for others, had his name and designation from there. Both *Messiah* in the Old Testament, and *Christ* in the New, mean the same as the *Anointed One*. For he was not only in his person typified in the anointed kings, priests, and prophets, but also, in his mediation, he was typified by the tabernacle, sanctuary, altar, and temple. Hence his unction is expressed in these words, Dan 9.24, "To anoint the Holy of Holies;" [8] he was prefigured by all the holy anointed ones before. This became his name as he was the hope of the church under the Old Testament, *the Messiah*; and as the immediate object

of the faith of the saints under the New Testament, *the Christ*. Therefore, here in the first place, we must inquire into the nature of this unction, because the unction of believers emanates from there, and it is to be interpreted by analogy to it. For (as it is usually expressed by way of allusion) it is like the oil which, being poured on the head of Aaron, went down to the skirts of his garments.[Psa 133.2]

3. That the Lord Christ was anointed, and how, is declared in Isa 61.1: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me." His unction consisted principally in the communication of the Spirit to him; for he proves that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, because he was anointed. And this gives us a general rule, that the anointing with material oil under the Old Testament, prefigured and represented the effusion of the Spirit under the New; which now answers all the ends of those typical institutions. Hence the gospel — in opposition to the letter, outwardly, visibly, and materially — is called the "ministration of the Spirit," 2Cor 3.6, 8. [9] This is how the unction of Christ is expressed: Isa 11.2, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

4. Though the unction of Christ consisted in the full communication of the Spirit to him, and not by measure,[Joh 3.34] in all his graces and gifts that were needful for his human nature or his work (though it is essentially one entire work), it was carried on by several degrees and distinctions of time; for —

(1.) He was anointed by the Spirit in his incarnation in the womb, Luk 1.35; we have explained the nature of this work at large before. [10]

(2.) He was anointed at his baptism and entrance into his public ministry, when he was anointed to preach the gospel, as in Isa 61.1: "The Spirit of

God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him," Mat 3.16. The first part of his unction more particularly respected a fullness of the *grace*; the latter a fullness of the *gifts* of the Spirit.

(3.) He was particularly anointed for his death and sacrifice, in that divine act of his by which he "sanctified himself," Joh 17.19; [11] this has also been declared before.

(4.) He was anointed at his ascension, when he received from the Father the promise of the Spirit, pouring him out on his disciples, Acts 2.33. [12]

And in this latter instance he was "anointed with the oil of gladness," which includes his glorious exaltation also. For this was absolutely unique to him, which is why he is said to be anointed "above his fellows." For in some other parts of this anointing, he has those who partake of those parts by and from him, in their measure. Yet in *this* anointing — of receiving the Spirit with a power to communicate him to others — in this he is singular; nor did any other person ever share in this with him in the least degree. See the Exposition on Heb 1.8-9. [13] Now, although there is an inconceivable difference and distance between the unction of Christ and that of believers, his is the only rule of interpreting theirs, as to its kind. And —

5. Believers have their unction immediately from Christ. So it is stated in the text: "You have an unction from the Holy One." So he is called, Acts 3.14; Rev 3.7, "These things says the one who is holy." He himself was anointed as the "Most Holy," Dan 9.24. And it is his Spirit which believers receive, Eph 3.16; Phi 1.19. It is said that "he who anoints us is God," 2Cor 1.21; and I take God there personally for the Father, as the same name is in the foregoing verse: "All the promises of God in him," that is, in Christ, "are yes, and in him Amen." Therefore, the Father is the original, supreme cause of our anointing; but the Lord Christ, the Holy One, is the immediate

efficient cause of it. This is what he expresses when he affirms that he will send the Spirit from the Father. The supreme donation is from the Father; the immediate collation [14] is from the Son.

6. It is therefore manifest that the anointing of believers consists in the communication of the Holy Spirit to them from and by Jesus Christ. It is not the Spirit that anoints us, but he is the unction with which we are anointed by the Holy One. The analogy to the unction of Christ makes this undeniable. For as he was anointed, so are they, and in the same kind of unction, though in a degree that is inferior to him. For they have nothing but a measure and portion from his fullness, as he pleases, Eph 4.7. [15] Our unction, therefore, is the communication of the Holy Spirit, and nothing else. He is that unction which is given to us, and abides with us. But this communication of the Spirit is general, and it respects all his operations. It does not yet appear what its special nature consists in, and why this communication of him is thus expressed as "an unction." And this can be learned in no other way than from the effects ascribed to him as he is an unction, and the similarity in this to the unction of Christ.

It is therefore some particular grace and privilege which is intended in this unction, 2Cor 1.21. [16] It is mentioned only neutrally, without ascribing any effects to it; thus we cannot learn its special nature in this. But there are two effects ascribed to it elsewhere. The first is teaching, with a saving, permanent knowledge of the truth produced in our minds by it. This is fully expressed, 1Joh 2.20, 27, "You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things;" that is, "All those things of the fundamental, essential truths of the gospel; all you need to know that you may obey God truly and be saved infallibly, you have by this unction. For this anointing which you have received abides in you, and teaches you all things." And we may

observe that it is spoken of in a special manner with respect to our permanency and establishment in the truth against prevalent seducers and seductions. So it is joined with *establishing* in that other verse, 2Cor 1.21.

Therefore, in the first place, this anointing with the Holy Ghost is the communication of him to us with respect to that gracious work of his in the spiritual, saving illumination of our minds, teaching us to know the truth, and to adhere firmly to it in love and obedience. This is what is particularly ascribed to it; and we have no way to know the nature of it except by its effects.

The anointing of believers with the Spirit, then, consists in the collation of Him upon them to this end: that he may graciously instruct them in the truths of the gospel by the saving illumination of their minds, causing their souls to firmly cling to them with joy and delight, and transforming them in the whole inward man into the image and likeness of it. Hence it is called the "anointing of our eyes with eye-salve that we may see," Rev 3.18. So it corresponds to that unction of the Lord Christ with the Spirit, which made him "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," Isa 11.3. Let these things, therefore, be fixed in the first place — namely, that the *tó chrisma*, the unction which believers receive from the Holy One, is the Spirit *himself*; and that his first, particular, special effect as an unction, is teaching us the truths and mysteries of the gospel by saving illumination, in the manner described before.

To this also is referred what is said of believers being made "kings and priests," Rev 1.6; for there is an allusion in this to the anointing of those sorts of persons under the Old Testament. Whatever was typical in this was fully accomplished in the unction of Christ for his office, in which he was the sovereign king, priest, and prophet of the church. Therefore, by

participating in his unction, they are said to be made "kings and priests," or "a royal priesthood," as it is, 1Pet 2.9; and this participating in his unction consists in the communication of the same Spirit to them with which he was anointed.

Therefore, because these titles denote the dignity of believers in their special relation to God, they are specially dedicated and consecrated to him by this unction.

It is therefore manifest, first, that this unction we receive from the Holy One is the Holy Spirit, which he has promised to all who believe in him; and then that we have these two things by virtue of this:

1. Spiritual instruction, by saving illumination in the mind of God and the mysteries of the gospel; and,

2. A special dedication to God, in the way of a spiritual privilege.

What remains is to inquire —

1. What benefit or advantage we have by this unction;

2. How this belongs to our consolation, seeing that the Holy Spirit is thus bestowed on us as he is promised to be the comforter of the church.

1. As to the first head our stability in believing depends on this. For it is pleaded to this purpose in a particular manner by the apostle,1Joh 2.20, 27. It was the "unction from the Holy One" which then kept believers from being carried from the faith by the craft of seducers. Hereby he makes men, according to their measure, "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Nor will anything else give assurance in this case. Temptations may come as a storm or tempest, which will quickly drive men from their greatest fleshly confidences. Hence, oftentimes those who are most forward to say they would not forsake the truth, even if all other men did so, are yet the most forward to do so under trials.[17] Nor will men's skill, cunning, or

disputing abilities, secure them from being, at one time or other, inveigled [18] with fair pretenses, or entangled with the cunning sleights of those who lie in wait to deceive. Nor will the best defenses of flesh and blood stand firmly and unshaken against powerful allurements on the one hand, and fierce persecutions on the other; the present artillery of the patrons and promoters of apostasy. The apostle prescribes or recommends none of these things to believers as an effectual means of their preservation when a trial of their stability in the truth befalls them. But he assures them this unction will not fail; nor will they fail, *because* of it.

And to this end we may consider —

(1.) The nature of the teaching which we have by this anointing: "The anointing teaches you." It is not merely an external doctrinal instruction, but an internal effectual operation of the Holy Ghost. In this, God gives us "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling," Eph 1.17-18. He indeed makes use of the outward means of instruction by the word, and he teaches nothing except what is revealed in it; but he gives us "an understanding that we may know him that is true;" 1Joh 5.20 and he opens our eyes that we may clearly and spiritually see the wondrous things that are in his law.

And there are no teachings like his: none so abiding, and none so effectual. When spiritual things, through this anointing, are revealed in a spiritual manner, then they take immovable possession in the minds of men. As God will destroy every oppressing yoke because of the anointing of Christ, Isa 10.27, [19] so he will break every snare of seduction by the anointing of Christians. So it is promised that under the gospel, "wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of the times," Isa 33.6. Nothing will

give stability in all seasons except the wisdom and knowledge which are the effects of this teaching, when God gives us "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

(2.) What it teaches, and that is *all things*: "The same anointing teaches you about all things." This was the promise: that he would "teach us all things," and "bring all things to our remembrance" that Christ has said to us, Joh 14.26, and "guide us into all truth," Joh 16.13. It is not all things absolutely that are intended; for they are restricted to those of one certain kind, specifically, the things which Christ had spoken — that is, those things which belong to the kingdom of God. Nor are all of *them* absolutely intended, especially as to the degrees of the knowledge of them; for in this life we know but in part, and see all things darkly as in a glass. [20] But it is all things, and all truth, with respect to the end of this promise and teaching. In the promise, the whole life of faith, with joy and consolation in that, is the end designed. This unction teaches us all things necessary to this. And in the other passage of the apostle, it respects the great fundamental truths of the gospel, which the seducers opposed, from whose seduction this unction secures believers. Therefore, it teaches all who are made partakers of it, all that truth, all those things, all that Christ has spoken, all that are necessary to these ends: that they may live to God in the consolation of faith, and be delivered from all attempts to draw them into error.

The degrees of this knowledge, which are exceedingly various, both with respect to the clearness and evidence of conception, and to the extent of the things known, depend on the various measures by which the Spirit acts. This is according to his own will, and the different use of the external means of knowledge which we enjoy. But none who enjoy this anointing, will come short of what is necessary to the ends mentioned. And where its

teachings are complied with in a way of duty, where we do not obstruct them by prejudices and sloth, where we give ourselves up to their directive efficacy in a diligent, impartial attendance to the word (by which alone we are to be taught), we will not fail to have that knowledge in the whole counsel of God, and all its parts, which he will accept and bless.

This gives stability to believers when trials and temptations about the truth befall them. And the lack of this, in the uncured darkness of their minds, and ignorance of the doctrine of the gospel, is what betrays multitudes into defecting from it in seasons of temptation and persecution.

(3.) It so teaches as to give with this, an approval of and love for the things that are taught. These are the next principle and cause of practice, or *doing* the things that we know. [21] This is the only cement of all the means of our security, rendering them firm and stable. The mind may discern spiritual truths, but if the will and affections are not worked over to love them and delight in them, we will never conform ourselves to them in the diligent exercise and practice of what they require. And whatever we may do on the solitary efficacy of light and conviction, without the adherence of love and delight, will not be acceptable to God, nor will we be permanent or stable in this. All other means in the world, without the love and practice of the truth, will be insufficient for our preservation in the saving profession of it. And this is the characteristic note of teaching by this unction. It gives and communicates with it the love of that truth in which we are instructed, and delight in obedience to what it requires. Where these are not found, however raised our minds may be or enlarged our understandings in the apprehension of objective truths; whatever sublime notions or subtle conceptions about them we may have; and though we could master and manage all the speculations and niceties of the schools in their most

pretended accuracy of expression — as to the power and benefit of religion, we would be but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.[1Cor 13.1]

But when the Holy Spirit, in and by his teaching, breathes into our hearts a holy, divine love for and contentment in the things we are taught; when he enables us to taste how gracious the Lord is in them, rendering them sweeter to us than the honey or the honeycomb; when he makes them our delight and joy, exciting and quickening the practical principles of our minds to comply with them in holy obedience — *then* we have that unction from the Holy One which will both sanctify and secure our souls to the end.

And hereby we may know whether we have received this anointing. Some would gladly put it off to what was particular to the times of the apostles. They would suppose there was another kind of believer in those days, than any that are now in the world, or need to be. Yet what our Savior prayed for them, even for the apostles themselves, as to the Spirit of grace and consolation, he also prayed for all those who would believe in him through their word, to the end of the world.[Joh 17.20]

But take away from Christians the promise of the Spirit, and the privileges depending on it, and in truth they cease to be Christians. Some neglect it as if it were an empty expression — either wholly insignificant, or at best intending something which they need not much concern themselves in. Whatever it is, they do not doubt they will secure the pretended ends of it (in their preservation from seduction) by their own skill and resolution. On such pretenses, all the mysteries of the gospel are despised by many, and a religion is formed in which the Spirit of Christ has no concern. But these things are otherwise stated in the minds of the true disciples of Christ. They know and own how great an importance it is to have a share in this unction; how much their conformity to Christ, their sharing of him, and the evidence

of their union with him; how much their stability in profession, their joy in believing, their love and delight in obedience, with their dignity in the sight of God and all his holy angels, depend on that unction. Nor do we look at it as an obscure or unintelligible thing, something no man can know whether he has it or not. For if it were so, if it were something so thin, aërial, [22] and imperceptible, that no spiritual sense or experience could be had of it, then the apostle would not have referred all sorts and degrees of believers to it — fathers, young men, and little children — for their relief and encouragement in times of danger. Therefore, it evidences itself in the way and manner of its acting, operation, and teaching, as declared before. By those instances they satisfy themselves as to what experience they have of it. And likewise, it is their duty to pray continually for its increase and for the further manifestation of its power in them. Indeed, it is their duty to labor that their prayers for it may be both fervent and effectual. For the more express and eminent the teachings of this anointing *are* in them, the fresher and more plentiful is their unction, and the more their holiness and consolation will abound.

Because this immediately proceeds from the Holy Spirit — as the means by which they have their particular dedication to God (being made kings and priests to him) — they are highly concerned to secure their interest in it. For it may be that they are so far from being exalted, promoted, and dignified in the world by their profession of Christ, that they are thereby made the scorn of men, and the outcasts of the people. Those whose kingdom and priesthood, whose dignity and honor in Christianity, whose nearness to God and Christ in a special manner, consist in secular titles, honor, power, and grandeur (as it is in the Papacy), may content themselves with their *chrism* — with the greasy unction of their outward, ceremonious

consecration — without much inquiry or concern about this spiritual anointing.

But those who get little or nothing in this world — that is, little by their profession of Christ, except labor, pain, travail of soul and body, with scorns, reproaches, and persecutions — need to look for what gives them dignity and honor in the sight of God, and brings satisfaction and peace to their own souls. And this is done by that anointing alone, by which they are made kings and priests to God, having honor before him, and a free, sacred access to him.

2. I will only add that, because we ascribe this anointing in a particular manner to the Holy Ghost *as* the comforter of the church, we may easily discern what the consolation which we receive by it consists in. For who can express that satisfaction, refreshment, and joy which the mind is possessed with, in those spiritual, effectual teachings which give it a clear apprehension of saving truth in its own nature and beauty, and which enlarge the heart with love for it and delight in it? It is true that most believers are often either at such a loss as to a clear apprehension of their own spiritual state; or they are unskilled in making a right judgment about the causes and means of divine consolations; or they are so confused in their own experiences, or so negligent in their inquiries into these things, or so disordered by temptations; that they do not receive a refreshing sense of those comforts and joys which are really inseparable from this anointing. But still, the anointing is, *in itself*, that spring from which their secret refreshments and supports arise. And so there are no anointed believers, upon guidance and instruction, who are not able to conceive how their highest joys and comforts — specifically those by which they are supported in and against all their troubles — are resolved into that spiritual

understanding which they have into the mysteries of the will, love, and grace of God in Christ. And with that, come the ineffable contentment and satisfaction which they find in them, by which their wills are engaged in an unconquerable constancy in their choice. There is no small consolation in a due apprehension of that spiritual dignity which ensues from this. For when they meet with the greatest troubles and the most contemptuous scorns in this world, a due apprehension of their acceptance with God, being made kings and priests to him, yields them a refreshment which the world knows nothing of, and which they themselves are not able to express.

1. The second sort will be found in .
2. τὸ χρίσμα [NT:5545] – anything smeared on, like an ointment; as in the priestly inauguration (Exo 28.40-41; 29.7).
3. Owen previously referred to the interpretation of this passage, and to Episcopius; see .
4. **1Joh 2:20-27** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. [21] I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. [22] Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. [23] Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. [24] Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that He has promised us-- eternal life. [26] These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you. [27] But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.
5. **2Cor 1:21** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God,
6. Excerpts from 1Joh 2.20-27.
7. Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637) – Flemish Jesuit; his commentary included every book but Job and Psalms. In vol 6, on this passage from 1John, a Lapide says, "S. Augustine (in loc.) says, This spiritual anointing is

the Holy Spirit Himself, and the outward anointing is the sacrament thereof. So, too, in the *Veni Creator*, we read of the 'Anointing Spirit.' The Holy Spirit then, inhabiting, enlightening, and directing the soul, teaches it at the fitting time, all things befitting its salvation. S. Clement (Const. Apost. iii. 17) explains the ceremonies of baptism and confirmation thus: —"Baptism is an administration into the death of the Son of God, water as betokening burial, oil the Holy Spirit, the sign of the Cross for the Cross itself, the Chrism as the confirmation of our confession."

8. לִמְשֹׁחַ קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים

9. **2Cor 3:6** who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life… [8] how will the ministry [or ministration] of the Spirit not be more glorious?

10. See *Pneumatologia*, Part I, Book II, Chap. III, p. 163.

11. **Joh 17:19** "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

12. **Act 2:33** "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

13. Owen's *Works*, vol. 19, ch. 1 (1850-53 edition, Wm. Goold, ed.).

14. *Collation*: the act of conferring or bestowing.

15. **Eph 4:7** But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

16. **2Cor 1:21** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God;

17. As in Peter's boast, and subsequent denial of Christ (Mat 26.33).

18. *Inveigled*: influenced or urged by subtle persuasion – here it means being lured.
19. **Isa 10:27** It shall come to pass in that day *That* his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, And his yoke from your neck, And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.
20. 1Cor 13.12.
21. **Mat 7:24** "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. **Jas 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
22. *Aerial*: characterized by lightness and insubstantiality; as impalpable or intangible as air.

Chapter VI. The Spirit is a seal, and how.

Secondly. Another effect of the Holy Spirit as the comforter of the church is that, believers are *sealed* by him: 2Cor 1.21, 22, "He who anointed us is God, who has also sealed us." And the same apostle declares how this is done, Eph 1.13, "In whom also after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." And Eph 4.30, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by which you are sealed to the day of redemption." In the first place, it is expressly said that we are sealed *with the Spirit*, meaning the Spirit himself is expressed as this seal, and not any of his special operations. He is also directly said to be, himself, the "earnest of our inheritance." In the latter, the words are *En tou esphragisthete*, [1] "In whom," *i.e.*, in and by the receiving of whom, "you are sealed." Therefore, no special act of the Spirit, but only a special effect of his being communicated to us, seems to be intended by this.

The common exposition of this sealing is taken from the nature and use of sealing among men, the sum of which is this: sealing may be considered as a natural or moral action — either with respect to the act of it, *as* an act; or

with respect to its use and end. In the first way, it is the communication of the character or image on the seal, to the thing that is sealed, or what the impression of the seal is set to. In answer to this, the sealing of the Spirit should consist in the communication of his own spiritual nature and likeness to the souls of believers. So this sealing should materially be the same as our sanctification. The end and use of sealing among men is twofold:

1. To give security to the performance of deeds, grants, promises, testaments, and wills, or the similar engaging signs of our minds. And corresponding to this, we may be said to be sealed, when the promises of God are confirmed and established to our souls, and we are secured about them by the Holy Ghost. But the truth is, this would be sealing the promises of God, and not believers themselves. But it is *persons*, and not *promises*, that are said to be sealed.

2. It is for the safe-keeping or preservation of that which a seal is set upon. So things that are precious and highly valuable are sealed up, so that they may be kept safe and inviolable. On the other hand, when Job expressed his apprehension that God would keep an everlasting remembrance of his sin, that it would not be lost or put away, he says, "his transgression was sealed up in a bag," Job 14.17. And so what is intended is that power which the Holy Ghost exerts in the preservation of believers. In this respect, they are said to be "sealed to the day of redemption."

These things have been spoken to and enlarged on by many, so that there is no need to insist on them again. What is commonly delivered to this purpose is good and useful in the substance of it, and on several occasions long since, I myself have made use of them.

But upon renewed thoughts and consideration, I cannot fully acquiesce in them; for —

1. I am not satisfied that there is such an allusion in this to the use of sealing among men as there is pretended to be. And if there is, it will fall out (as we've seen) that there being so many considerations of seals and sealing, it will be hard to determine which in particular is principally intended. And if you take in more — as the way of most is to take in all they can think of — it will be unavoidable that acts and effects of various kinds will be assigned to the Holy Ghost under the term "sealing." And so we will never come to know what that one determinate act and privilege is, which is intended in this sealing.

2. All things which are usually assigned as those in which this sealing consists, are acts or effects of the Holy Ghost upon us — those by which he seals us. And yet it is not said that the *Holy Spirit seals us*, but that *we are sealed with him*; [2] he is God's seal to us. Eph 1.13

All our spiritual privileges are immediately communicated to us by Christ; and so they consist wholly in a sharing of that head, spring, and fullness which is in him. And just as they proceed from our union with him, so their principal end is conformity to him. And in him, in whom all things are conspicuous, we may learn the nature of those things which, in lesser measure and with much darkness in ourselves, we are made partakers of. So we learn *our* unction, in *his* unction. So we must inquire into the nature of *our* being sealed by the Spirit, in *his* sealing also. For just as it is said that "he who has sealed us is God," 2Cor 1.21-22, so it is said emphatically of Christ, "For God the Father has sealed him," Joh 6.27. Thus, if we can learn rightly how God the Father sealed Christ, we will learn how we are sealed in sharing the same privilege.

I confess there are variety of apprehensions concerning the act of God by which Christ was sealed, or what is intended by it. Maldonate,[3] on the passage, reckons ten separate expositions of the words among the fathers; and yet he embraces no one of them. It is not suited to my design to examine or refute the expositions of others, of which a large and plain field opens itself to us here. I will only give an account of what I conceive to be the mind of the Holy Ghost in that expression. And we may observe —

First. That this is not spoken of Christ with respect to his divine nature. He is, indeed, said to be the character of the person of the Father in his divine person as the Son, because there are in him, communicated to him from the Father, all the essential properties of the divine nature, just as the thing sealed receives the character or image of the seal.

But this communication is by eternal generation, and not by sealing. It is an external, transient act of God the Father on the human nature, with respect to the discharge of his office. For it is given as the reason why he should be complied with and believed on in that work: "Labor for that bread which the Son of man will give you; for God the Father has sealed him." Joh 6.27 It is the ground on which he persuades them to faith and obedience to himself.

Secondly. It is not spoken of him with a special respect to his kingly office, as some conceive. For they would have this sealing of Christ to be his designation by God to his kingdom, in opposition to what is affirmed in Joh 6.15, that the people designed to come and make him a king by force. For that is only an occasional expression of the sense of the people, the principal subject treated is of a nobler nature. But because the people flocked after him on account of a temporal benefit received by him — in that they were fed, filled, and satisfied with the loaves which he had

miraculously increased, Joh 6.26 — he takes occasion from that to propose to them the spiritual mercies that he had to tender to them. He does this in answer to the bread they had eaten, under the name of "meat," and "bread enduring to everlasting life," which he would give to them. Joh 6.27 Under this name and notion of meat, he comprised all the spiritual nourishment that he had prepared for them in his doctrine, person, mediation, and grace. But on what grounds should they look for these things from him? How might it appear that he was authorized and enabled to do this? In answer to that inquiry, he gives this account of himself: "For God the Father has sealed him," — namely, sealed him to this end.

Thirdly. Therefore, the sealing of God to this end and purpose must have two properties and two ends also annexed to it:

1. There is a communication of *authority* and *ability* in it. For the inquiry is how Christ could give them that meat which endures to everlasting life, as they expressly ask afterwards, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Joh 6.52. To this it is answered that God the Father had sealed him; that is, he was enabled by God the Father to give and dispense the spiritual food of the souls of men. This, therefore, is evidently included in this sealing.

2. It must also have *evidence* in it— that is, something by which it may be evinced that he was thus authorized and enabled by God the Father. For whatever authority or ability anyone may have to any end, none is obliged to apply to him for it, or depend on him in this, unless it is evidenced that he has that authority and ability. This is what the Jews immediately inquired after. "What sign," they ask, "do you then show, that we may see it and believe you? What do you work?" Joh 6.30; — "How will it be demonstrated to us that you are authorized and enabled to give us the

spiritual food of our souls?" This also belonged to his sealing; for there was an express representation of divine power communicated to him, and it was evidently manifested in this: that he was appointed by God to this work.

These two properties, therefore, must be found in this sealing of the Lord Christ with respect to the end mentioned here — namely, that he might be the *promus condus*, or principal dispenser, of the spiritual food of the souls of men.

Fourthly. It being God's seal, it must also have two ends designed in it:

1. God's owning him to be His. "God the Father has sealed him" to this end: that all may know and take notice of his owning and approving of Christ. He would not have him looked at as one among the rest of them that dispensed spiritual things, but as the one whom he had singled out and uniquely marked for himself. And therefore God publicly and gloriously testified to this at the entrance, and again a little before the finishing, of Christ's ministry. For upon his baptism there came "a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Mat 3.17. This was nothing but a public declaration that this was the one whom God had sealed, and so he was owned in a unique manner. And this testimony was later renewed again, at his transfiguration on the mount: Mat 17.5, "Behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him;" — or, "This is the one whom I have sealed." And this testimony is pleaded by the apostle Peter as that into which their faith in him was resolved, as the sealed one of God, 2Pet 1.17-18.

2. To manifest that God would take care of him, and preserve him in his work to the end. [4]

Fifthly. Therefore, this sealing of the Son is the communication of the Holy Spirit in all fullness to the Son, authorizing him for, and acting his divine power in, all the acts and duties of his office. This is so as to evidence the presence of God with him, and His approval of him, as the only person that was to distribute the spiritual food of their souls to men. For the Holy Spirit, by his powerful operations in Christ and by him, evinced and manifested that he was called and appointed by God to this work, owned and accepted by him — *this* was God's sealing of him. Hence the sin of those who despised this seal of God was unpardonable. For God neither will nor can give greater testimony to his approval of any person, than by the great seal of his Spirit; and this was given to Christ in all its fullness. He was "declared to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness," Rom 1.4; and he was "justified in the Spirit," or by his power evidencing that God was with him, 1Tim 3.16. Thus God sealed the Head of the church with the Holy Spirit. And undoubtedly, we may best learn from this how the members of Christ are sealed with the same Spirit, seeing that we all have our measures out of his fullness, and our conformity to him is the design of all gracious communications to us.

Sixthly. Therefore, God's sealing of believers with the Holy Spirit is his gracious communication of the Holy Ghost to them, to act his divine power in them so as to enable them for all the duties of their holy calling. This evidences that they are accepted with him both for themselves and others; and it asserts their preservation unto eternal salvation. The effects of this sealing are gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in and upon believers; but the sealing itself is the *communication* of the Spirit to them. They are sealed with the Spirit. And to further evidence the nature of it, with the truth of our declaration of this privilege, we may observe —

1. That when any persons are so effectively called as to become true believers, they are brought into many new relationships — such as to God himself as his children; to Jesus Christ as his members; to all saints and angels in the families of God above and below, as brethren. And they are called to many new works, duties, and uses, which they knew nothing of before. They are brought into a new world, erected by the new creation; and whichever way they look or turn, they say, "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." So it is with everyone who is made a new creature in Christ Jesus, 2Cor 5.17. In this state and condition — in which a man has new principles put within him, new relationships contracted about him, new duties presented to him, and a new deportment in all things required of him — how will he be able to behave himself rightly, and respond to the condition and holy station in which he is placed? No man can do this of himself, for "who is sufficient for these things?" 2Cor 2.16 Therefore —

2. In this state God owns them, and communicates his Holy Spirit to them, to fit them for their relationships, to enable them for their duties, to act their new principles, and in every way to discharge the work they are called to — even as their head, the Lord Christ, was fitted for his. God does not give them "the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2Tim 1.7. And hereby God seals them; for —

(1.) Hereby he gives his testimony to them, that they are his, owned by him and accepted with him as his sons or children — which is his seal. For if they were not so, he would never have given his Holy Spirit to them. And in this consists the greatest testimony that God gives, and the only seal that he sets to anyone in this world. The apostle Peter proves that this is God's testimony and seal in Acts 15.8-9; for on the debate of that question —

whether God approved and accepted the humble believers, even though they did not observe the rites of Moses — he confirms that God did approve and accept it, with this argument:

"God," he says, "who knows the hearts, bore them witness." How did he do it? How did he set his seal to them as being His? Peter says, "By giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did to us." Hereby God gives testimony to them. And lest anyone suppose that it was only the gifts and miraculous operations of the Holy Ghost which Peter referred to — so that this sealing of God consists in this alone — he adds that the Spirit's gracious operations also, were no less an effect of this witness which God gave to them: "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

This, therefore, is that by which God gives his testimony to believers — namely, when he seals them with his Spirit, or by the communication of the Holy Spirit to them. And he does this in two respects; for —

(2.) This is that by which he gives believers *assurance* of their relation to him, of their interest in him, and of his love for and favor to them. It has been generally conceived that this sealing with the Spirit is what gives assurance to believers — and indeed it does so, although the way by which it does this has not been rightly apprehended. Therefore, none have been able to declare the special nature of that act of the Spirit by which he seals us, and from which such assurance ensues. But indeed, it is not any *act* of the Spirit in us that is the ground of our assurance, but the *communication* of the Spirit to us. The apostle plainly testifies of this in 1Joh 3.24, "By this we know that he abides in us: by the Spirit which he has given us." That God abides in us, and we in him, is the subject-matter of our assurance. "This we know," says the apostle; this expresses the highest assurance we

are capable of in this world. And how do we know it? Specifically, "by the Spirit which he has given us."

But the sense of these words may be that the Spirit which God gives us, by some special work of his, *effects* this assurance in us. And so it is not his being given *to us*, but some special work of his *in us*, that is the ground of our assurance, and consequently of our sealing. I do not deny such a special work of the Spirit (as will be declared afterward); but I judge it is the communication of the Spirit himself to us that is intended here. For the apostle declares this is the sense of it, 1Joh 4.13, "By this know we that we dwell in God, and he in us: because he has given us of his Spirit." This is the great evidence, the great ground of assurance which we have, that God has taken us into a near and dear relation to himself, "because he has given us of his Spirit" — that great and heavenly gift which he will impart to no others. And, indeed, on this one hinge depends the whole case of that assurance which believers are capable of: if the Spirit of God dwells in us, then we are his; but "if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom 8.9.

The determination of our special relation to God depends on this alone. And therefore, by this God seals believers; and in this he gives them assurance of his love; and this is to be the sole rule of your self-examination, as to whether you are sealed by God or not.

(3.) Hereby God evidences believers to the world; which is another end of sealing. Hereby he so marks them as his own, that the world in general cannot help but take notice of them. For where God sets this seal in the communication of his Spirit, it will so operate and produce such effects, that they will fall under the observation of the world. As it did in the Lord Christ, so also it will do in believers according to their measure.

And there are two ways by which God's sealing evidences believers to the world. The one is by the effectual operation of the Spirit, communicated to them both in gifts and graces. Though the world is blinded with prejudices, and under the power of a prevalent enmity against spiritual things, yet it cannot help but discover what a change is made in most of those whom God thus seals; and how, by the gifts and graces of the Spirit (which the world hates), believers are differentiated from other men. And this is what keeps up the difference and enmity that exists in the world between the seeds.[Gen 3.15] For God's sealing of believers with his Spirit, evidences his special acceptance of them. This fills the hearts of those who are moved by the spirit of Cain, with hatred and revenge. Hence many think that the regard which God had for the sacrifice of Abel was evidenced by some visible sign, which Cain also might take notice of; and that there was an *empurismos*,[5] the kindling of his sacrifice by fire from heaven; which was the type and resemblance of the Holy Ghost, as has been shown. All other causes of difference are capable of a composition;[6] but this cause, about the seal of God, can never be composed. And what follows from it is that those who are thus sealed with the Spirit of God, cannot help but separate themselves from most of the world — by which it is more evidenced to whom they belong.

(4.) Hereby God seals believers for the day of redemption or everlasting salvation; for the Spirit thus given to them, as we have already shown, is to "abide with them forever," as a "well of water in them, springing up into everlasting life," Joh 4.14, 7.38.

Therefore, his Holy Spirit is that seal which God grants to believers for the ends mentioned. And according to their measure, and for this work and end, it corresponds to that great seal of heaven which God gave to the Son,

by communicating the Spirit to him in all its divine fullness, authorizing and enabling him for his whole work, and evidencing he was called by God to this.

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1. Ἐν τῷ ἐσφραγίσθητε.
2. John Gill would later write: "the seal by which they are sealed, is not any of the ordinances, such as circumcision under the Old Testament, or baptism or the Lord's supper under the New; for these are not seals, nor are they ever so called; but it is the Spirit of God himself, as the Holy Spirit of promise; for the same one who is called the "earnest" in the next clause, is the seal." Owen will address that next clause in the next chapter. – WHG
3. Or *Maldonatus*, Juan Maldonado (1533-1583), Jesuit theologian and commentator, born in Madrid.
4. **Isa 42:1-4** "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. [2] He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. [3] A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. [4] He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law."
5. ἐμπυρισμός. LXX. **Num 11:3** So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire [*empurismos*] of the LORD had burned among them.
6. *Composition*: a mixture of ingredients, causes, or parts.

Chapter VII. The Spirit is an earnest, and how.

Thirdly. Again, the Holy Spirit, as thus communicated to us, is said to be an "earnest." The word in the original, *arrhabon* [1] is not used anywhere in the New Testament except in this matter alone, 2Cor 1.22, 5.5; Eph 1.14. The Latin translator renders this word as *pignus*, a pledge. But he is corrected in this by Hierom [2] on Eph 1. And this reason is generally accepted by expositors: a pledge is what is committed to and left in the hand of another, to secure him that the money which is borrowed on that pledge will be repaid; and then the pledge is to be received back again. Hence it is necessary that a pledge be *more* in value than the money received, because it is taken in security for repayment. But an earnest is only a *part* of what is to be given or paid, or some lesser thing that is given to secure something that is more or greater, of the same or of another kind. And this difference must be allowed if we are obliged to the precise meaning and common use of pledges and earnests among men, which we must inquire into. The word is supposed to be derived from the Hebrew *arabown*; [3] and the Latins also make use of it, *arrhabon* and *arrha*. It is

sometimes used by other authors, such as Plutarch [4] in *Galba*: he prepossessed Obinius with great sums of money, as an earnest of what he would do afterward. [5] Hesychius explains it by *prodoma*, [6] a gift beforehand. [7] I will declare what I apprehend to be the mind of the Holy Ghost in this expression, in the ensuing observations:

First. It is not any act or work of the Holy Spirit on us or in us that is called his being an "earnest." It is he himself who is this earnest. This is expressed in every place where mention is made of it: 2Cor 1.22 — "The earnest of the Spirit" [8] — it is that earnest which is the Spirit, or the Spirit as an earnest, as Austin reads the words: "Arrhabona Spiritum." 2Cor 5.5, "Who has also given us the earnest of the Spirit." The giving of this earnest is constantly assigned as an act of God the Father, who would send the Comforter to the church according to the promise of Christ.Joh 14.26

And in the other passage, Eph 1.14, it is expressly said that the Holy Spirit is the "earnest of our inheritance." Everywhere the article is the masculine gender, *hos estin arrhabon*, [9] and *Pneuma*, the Spirit, is neuter. Some would have it refer to Christ, in verse 12. But it is not unusual in Scripture for the subjunctive article and relative to agree in gender with the following substantive, as it does here: *hos* (who) agrees with *arrhabon* (earnest). So the Scripture, speaking of the Holy Ghost, *Pneuma*, is neuter gender; yet, having respect to the thing — that is, the person of the Spirit — it subjoins the pronoun of the masculine gender to it, as in Joh 14.26. Therefore, the Spirit himself is the earnest, as given to us from the Father by the Son. And this act of God is expressed by giving or putting him into our hearts, 2Cor 1.22. How he does this has been declared before, both in general and with respect in particular to his inhabitation. Therefore, the meaning of the words

is that God gives us his Holy Spirit to dwell in us, and to abide with us, as an earnest of our future inheritance.

Secondly. It is indifferent whether we use the term *earnest* or *pledge* in this matter. Although I choose to retain the term *earnest*, from the most usual acceptance of the word, it is not for the reason alleged, which is taken from the special nature and use of an earnest in the dealings of men. It is only the purpose of an earnest for which the Holy Ghost is so called, which is the same as a pledge; we are not to force the similitude or allusion any further. For among men, an earnest is precisely the confirmation of a bargain and contract made on equal terms between buyers and sellers or exchangers. But there is no such contract between God and us. It is true, an antecedent covenant is supposed, but not as a bargain or contract between God and us. The covenant of God, as it respects the dispensation of the Spirit, is merely a free, gratuitous promise; and the stipulation of obedience on our part is consequential to this. Again, the one who gives an earnest in a contract or bargain, does not principally aim at his own obligation to pay such and such a sum of money, or something equivalent to this (though he does that also). Rather, his principal design is to secure for himself what he has bargained for, so that it may be delivered to him at the appointed time. But there is nothing of this nature in the earnest of the Spirit, in which God intends *our* assurance only, and not his own. And there are various other things in which the comparison will not hold, nor is it to be urged, because they are not intended.

The general end of an earnest or a pledge is all that is alluded to; and this end is to give security of something that is future, or to come. This may be done by way of free bounty as well as the strictest contract. It is as if a man had a poor friend or relation. He may, of his own accord, give him a sum of

money, and ask him to take it as a pledge or earnest of what more he will yet do for him.

So too, in a way of sovereign grace and bounty, God gives his Holy Spirit to believers, and lets them know that it is with a design to give them yet much more in his appointed season; and here the Spirit is said to be an earnest. Other things that are observed, from the nature and use of an earnest in civil contracts and bargains between men, do not belong to this, even though many things are occasionally spoken and discussed from them, that has good use for edification.

Thirdly. In two of the places in which mention is made of this matter, the Spirit is said to be an "earnest," but in what, or to what end, is not expressed, 2Cor 1.22, 5.5. [10] The third place affirms that he is an "earnest of our inheritance," Eph 1.14. What that is, and how he is such an earnest, may be briefly declared. —

1. We have already manifested that all our participation [11] of the Holy Spirit, in any kind, is on account of Jesus Christ; and we receive him immediately as the Spirit of Christ — for "to as many as receive Christ, the Father gives power to become the sons of God," Joh 1.12. "And because we are sons, he sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts," Gal 4.6. As we receive the Spirit from him, *as* his Spirit, so he is given to us to make us conformable to Christ, and to give us a participation in his gifts, graces, and privileges.

2. Christ himself, in his own person, is the "heir of all things," Heb 1.2. So he was appointed by God, and therefore the whole inheritance is absolutely his. In the exposition of that verse, [12] I have declared at large what this inheritance is, and the glory and power contained in it.

3. By his sin, man had universally forfeited his whole right to all the ends of his creation, both on the earth below and in heaven above. Death and hell had become all that the whole race of mankind had either right or title to. Yet all the glorious things that God had provided were not to be thrown away; an heir was to be provided for them. Abraham, when he was old and rich, had no child. He complained that his steward, a servant, was to be his heir, Gen 15.2-4. But God lets him know that he would provide another heir for him, of his own seed. When man had lost his right to the whole inheritance of heaven and earth, God did not use the forfeiture to seize it all by the hands of justice and destroy it. Rather, he invested the whole inheritance in his Son, making him the heir of all. He was fit for this, being God's eternal Son by nature; and the donation of this was free, gratuitous, and absolute. This grant was confirmed to him by his unction with the fulness of the Spirit. But —

4. This inheritance, as to our interest in it, lay under a forfeiture. And as to us, it must be redeemed and purchased, or else we can never be made partakers of it. Therefore, the Lord Christ, who had a right in his own person to the whole inheritance by the free grant and donation of the Father, would yet redeem it from under the forfeiture, and purchase it *for us* to possess. Hence it is called "The purchased possession." How this purchase was made, what made it necessary, by what means it was effected, are declared in the doctrine of our redemption by Christ, the price which he paid, and the purchase that he made by it. Upon this, the whole inheritance is vested in the Lord Christ, not only as to his own person and his right to the whole, but he became the great trustee for the whole church; and he had their interest in this inheritance committed to him also. No man, therefore, can have a right to this inheritance, or to any part of it — not to the least

share of God's creation here below as a part of the rescued or purchased inheritance — except by virtue of having an interest in Christ, and union with him. Therefore —

Fourthly. The way by which we come to have an interest in Christ, and thereby a right to the inheritance, is by sharing the Spirit of Christ, as the apostle fully declares in Rom 8.14-17. [13] For it is by the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of the Son, that we are made children. Now, the apostle says, "If we are children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Children are heirs to their father. And those who are children of God are heirs of that inheritance which God has provided for his children, who are "heirs of God." All the good things of grace and glory which believers are made partakers of in this world, or in the world to come, are called their "inheritance," because they are the effects of free, gratuitous adoption. They are not things that believers have purchased, bargained for, earned, or merited, but an inheritance that depends on and follows solely upon their free, gratuitous adoption. But how can they become "heirs of God," seeing that God has absolutely appointed the Son alone to be "heir of all things," Heb 1.2? *He* was the heir to whom the whole inheritance belonged. Why, says the apostle, we are made joint heirs with Christ by the participation of the Spirit of Christ. The whole inheritance, as to Christ's own personal right, was entirely his by the free donation of the Father, all power in heaven and earth being given to him. But if he would take others into a joint right with him, then he must purchase it for them, which he did accordingly.

Fifthly. Hence it is manifest how the Holy Spirit becomes the "earnest of our inheritance." For by him, that is, by the communication of him to us, we are made "joint heirs with Christ," which gives us our right and title. By this, our names are, as it were, inserted into the assured conveyance of the

great and full inheritance of grace and glory. In giving his Spirit to us, making us co-heirs with Christ, we have the greatest and most assured earnest and pledge of our future inheritance.

And thus he is an earnest until "the redemption of the purchased possession." For after a man has a good and firm title to an inheritance settled in him, it may be a long time before he takes actual possession of it; and he may have many difficulties in the meantime to conflict with. It is so in this case. The "earnest of the Spirit" given to us, by which we become co-heirs with Christ (whose Spirit we are made partakers of), secures the title of the inheritance in and for our whole persons. But before we can fully possess it, not only do we have many spiritual trials and temptations to conflict with in our souls, but also our bodies are liable to death and corruption. Therefore, whatever "first-fruits" we may enjoy, we cannot yet enter into the actual possession of the whole inheritance until not only our souls are delivered from all sins and temptations, but also our bodies are rescued out of the dust of the grave. This is the full "redemption of the purchased possession." This is why it is signally called the "redemption of the body," Rom 8.23.

Thus the Lord Christ himself was made "heir of all things" by that communication of the Spirit to him, by which he was anointed for his office. So too, the participation of the same Spirit from him and by him, makes us co-heirs with him. And so the Spirit is an earnest given to us by God, ensuring the future inheritance. It is not part of my present purpose to declare the nature of that inheritance of which the Holy Spirit is the earnest; but in brief, it is the highest participation with Christ in that glory and honor that our natures are capable of.

And in like manner, we are said to receive "the first-fruits of the Spirit," Rom 8.23; [14] that is, the Spirit himself as the first-fruits of our spiritual and eternal redemption. God had appointed that the first-fruits, which are called *re'shiyth* and *bikkuwr*, [15] should be a *teruwmah*, [16] an offering to himself. This first-fruit (*aparche*) corresponds to, and is taken generally for that which is first in any kind, Rom 16.5; 1Cor 15.20; Jas 1.18; Rev 14.4. And the "first-fruits of the Spirit" must be either what he first works in us (or all his fruits in us with respect to the full harvest that is to come), or the Spirit himself as the beginning and pledge of future glory. It is the latter of these that is intended in this place. For the apostle discourses about the liberty of the whole creation from that state of bondage to which all things were subjected by sin. With respect to this, he says that believers themselves, having not yet obtained a full deliverance (as he expressed it in Rom 7.24), groan for its perfect accomplishment.

Yet, he says, we have the beginning of it, the first-fruits of it, in the communication of the Spirit to us. For "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2Cor 3.17. For we are not capable of the full and perfect estate of the liberty provided for the children of God while we are in this world, conflicting with the remainders of sin, pressed and exercised with temptations, and our bodies being subject to death and corruption. Yet, where the Spirit of the Lord is, where we have that first-fruit of the fullness of our redemption, there is liberty in the real beginning of it, and assured consolation, because it will be consummated in the appointed season.

These are some of the spiritual benefits and privileges which believers enjoy by a sharing of the Holy Ghost as the promised comforter of the church. He is these things to them; and as to all other things belonging to their consolation, he works those in them. This is what we must inquire into

next. Only, we may take notice of some things from what we have already insisted on; such as —

1. That all evangelical privileges which believers are made partakers of in this world, center in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is the great promise that Christ has made to his disciples, the great legacy which he has bequeathed to them. The grant made to him by the Father, when Christ had done all his will, and fulfilled all righteousness, and exalted the glory of his holiness, wisdom, and grace, was this grant of the Holy Spirit, to be communicated by Him to the church. He received this from the Father as the complement of his reward — in which he saw "the travail of his soul, and was satisfied." Isa 53.11 He now gives this Spirit to believers, and no tongue can express the benefits which they receive by it. In this they are anointed and sealed; in this they receive the earnest and first-fruits of immortality and glory — in a word, in this they are taken into sharing with Christ himself, all his honor and glory. Hereby their condition is rendered honorable, safe, and comfortable; and the whole inheritance is unchangeably secured for them. Therefore, in this one privilege of receiving the Spirit, all others are enwrapped; for —

2. No one way, or thing, or similitude, can express or represent the greatness of this privilege. It is *anointing*; it is *sealing*; it is an *earnest* and *first-fruit* — it is everything by which the love of God and the blessed security of our condition may be expressed or intimated to us. For what greater pledge can we have of the love and favor of God, what greater dignities can we be made partakers of, what greater assurance of a future blessed condition can we have, than what God has given us by his Holy Spirit? And,

3. Hence, it is also manifest how abundantly willing God is that the heirs of promise should receive strong consolation in all their distresses, when they flee for refuge to the hope that is set before them.[Heb 6.18]

1. Ἀῤῥαβών [NT:758] **2Cor 1:22** who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as an *earnest* [or deposit].
2. That is, Jerome (340-420), translator of the Latin Vulgate Bible, which was commissioned by the pope in 382 AD.
3. עֵרָבוֹן [OT:06162] – a pledge or deposit.
4. Plutarch (46–120) – Greek historian, biographer and essayist, known primarily for *Parallel Lives* and *Moralia*.
5. Ἐφθάκει προειληφὼς ἀῤῥαβῶσι μεγάλοις τὸν Ὀβίνιον.
6. πρόδομα.
7. Hesychius of Alexandria, a Greek grammarian of the 5th or 6th century A.D.
8. Δοὺς τὸν ἀῤῥαβῶνα τοῦ Πνεύματος.
9. ὅς ἐστιν ἀῤῥαβών – who is the earnest.
10. KJV **2Cor 1:22** Who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. **2Cor 5:5** Now he that has fashioned us for the self-same thing *is* God, who also has given to us the earnest of the Spirit.
11. Participation here refers to sharing in common.
12. *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 19, ch. 1.
13. **Rom 8:14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together. **Rom 8:9** But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God

dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His [*i.e., he has no share or interest in Christ*].

14. ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος – *aparchen* [NT:536] *tou Pneumatos.*

15. רֵאשִׁית *re'shiyth* [OT:07225] (Lev 2.12); בִּכּוּרִים *bikkuwr* [OT:01061] (Exo 23.16).

16. תְּרוּמָה *teruwmah* [OT:08641] an offering or contribution (Exo 25.2); as distinct from *corban* קָרְבָּן [OT:07133] (Lev 1.2).

The Application of the Foregoing Discourse.

With respect to the dispensation of the Spirit towards believers, and his holy operations in and upon them, there are various particular duties of which he is the *immediate object* prescribed to them. And these duties are those by which, on our part, we comply with him in his work of grace, and by which it is carried on and rendered useful to us. Now, because this Holy Spirit is a *divine person*, and he acts in all things towards us as a *free agent*, according to his own will, the things enjoined of us with respect to him, are those by which we may carry ourselves rightly towards such a one — namely, as he is a *holy, divine, intelligent person*, working freely in and towards us for our good. And these duties are of two sorts, the first of which are expressed in *prohibitions* of those things which are unsuited to him and his dealings with us; the latter are expressed in *commands* for our attendance to those duties which are particularly suited to complying with him in his operations. In both sorts, our obedience is to be exercised with a particular regard to him. I will begin with the first sort, and go over the instances given to us in the Scripture:

First. We have a negative precept to this purpose: Eph 4.30 — "Do not grieve the holy Spirit;" [1] — "Consider who he is, what he has done for you, how great your concern is in his continuance with you, and that he is a free, infinitely wise, and holy agent in all that he does, who came freely to you, and can withdraw from you; do not grieve him." It is the person of the Holy Spirit that is intended in the words. This appears —

1. From the manner of the expression, *to Pneuma to hagion* [2]— "that holy Spirit."

2. By the work assigned to him; for by him we are "sealed until the day of redemption."

We are not to "grieve" him. The expression seems to be borrowed from Isa 63.10, where mention is made of the sin and evil prohibited here: — "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit." [3] The Hebrew word for vexed, *'atsab*, is to "trouble" and to "grieve." It is used when it is done to a great degree. The LXX renders it here by *parozunoo*, [4] which is to so grieve as to irritate and provoke to anger and indignation, because it is with respect to the rebellions of the people in the wilderness, which our apostle expresses by *parapikraino* and *parapikrasmos*, [5] words with the same meaning. To "vex," therefore, is the heightening of grieving, by provoking to anger and indignation. This sense is suited to the place and the matter addressed, though the word signifies no more than to "grieve;" and so it is rendered by *lupeo*, [6] Gen 45.5; 2Sam 19.2.

Now, grief is ascribed here to the Holy Spirit as it is elsewhere ascribed to God absolutely: as in Gen 6.6, "It sorrowed the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Such affections and perturbations of mind are ascribed to God or the Spirit only metaphorically. What is intended in such ascriptions, is to give us an apprehension of things

as we are able to receive it. And the measure we take of them, is their nature and effects in ourselves. What may justly grieve a good man, and what he will do when he is unjustly or undeservedly grieved, represent to us what we are to understand of our own condition with respect to the Holy Ghost, when he is said to be grieved by us. And grief, in the sense intended here, is a troubled mind arising from an apprehension of unkindness that is not deserved, of disappointments that are not expected, on account of the close concern we have for those who grieve us. We may therefore see from this, what we are warned of when we are enjoined not to grieve the Holy Spirit; such as —

1. There is necessarily an unkindness in what we do. Sin has various respects towards God — of guilt, filth, and the like. These several considerations of it have several effects. But what is denoted when it is said to "grieve him," is an accompanying unkindness, or a lack of love corresponding to the fruits and testimonies of his love which we have received. He is the Spirit of love; he *is* love. All his actings towards us and in us are fruits of love; and all of them leave an impression of love on our souls. All the joy and consolation we are made partakers of in this world, arise from a sense of the love of God, communicated in an endearing way of love to our souls. This requires a return of love, and a delight in all duties of obedience on our part. When instead of this, by our negligence and carelessness, or otherwise, we fall into those things or ways which he most abhors, he greatly regards the unkindness and ingratitude that is in this, and he is therefore said to be grieved by us.

2. Disappointment in expectation. It is known that, properly, no disappointment can befall the Spirit of God — it is utterly inconsistent with his prescience and omniscience. But we are disappointed when things do

not happen as we justly expected they would, in accordance with the means used by us for their accomplishment. And when the means that God uses towards us do not produce the effect they are suited to, because of our sin, God presents himself as being disappointed. Thus he says this about his vineyard: "I looked for it to bring forth grapes, and it produced wild grapes," Isa 5.4.

Now, disappointment causes grief, as when a father has used all means for the education of a child in any honest way or course of life, and expended much of his estate in this. If the father's expectation fails through the child's dissoluteness or idleness, and his child disappoints him, it fills the father with grief. There are great things done for us by the Spirit of God; all of them have their tendency to increase holiness, light, and love. Where they are not answered, where there is not a suitable effect, there is that disappointment which causes grief. This is especially so with respect to some signal mercies. A return in holy obedience is justly expected on their account; and where this is not found, it is something that causes grief. We are minded here, "Do not grieve the holy Spirit of God, by which you are sealed until the day of redemption." So great a kindness should have produced effects other than those mentioned there by the apostle. [7]

3. The concern of the Holy Spirit in us, concurs with his being grieved by us; for we are grieved by those with whom we are particularly concerned; the miscarriages of others we can pass over without any such trouble. And there are two things that give us a special concern in others:

(1.) *Relation*, such as that of a father, a husband, a brother. This makes us concerned in, and consequently to be grieved for, the miscarriages of those who are related to us. So is it with the Holy Spirit. He has undertaken the office of a comforter towards us, and he stands in that relation to us. Hence

he is so concerned in us, that he is said to be grieved with our sins, when he is not so grieved at the sins of those to whom he does not stand in special relation.

(2.) *Love* gives concern, and it makes way for grief on the occasion of sin. Those whom we love we are grieved for and by. Others may provoke indignation, but they do not cause grief, I mean not on their own account; for otherwise we ought to grieve for the sins of all. And what is the special love of the Holy Ghost towards us, has been declared.

From what has been said, it is evident what we are warned about, and what is enjoined of us, when we are cautioned not to grieve the Holy Spirit, and how we may do so; for we grieve him —

(1.) When we are not influenced by his love and kindness to respond to his mind and will in all holy obedience, accompanied with joy, love, and delight. *This* he deserves at our hands; *this* he expects from us. And when it is neglected, we are said to grieve him because of his concern in us. For he looks not only for our obedience, but also that it be filled with joy, love, and delight. When we attend to our duties with an unwilling mind, or when we apply ourselves to any acts of obedience with an attitude of bondage or servility, we grieve him — for he has deserved other things from us.

(2.) When we lose and forget the sense and impression of signal mercies received by him. Thus the apostle, to give efficacy to his prohibition, adds the signal benefit which we receive by the Spirit, in that he seals us until the day of redemption. What that is, and what it consists in, has been declared. And from this, it is evident that he speaks of the Holy Spirit as dwelling in believers; for *as such* he seals them. Contrarily, in and by sin, we forget the great grace, kindness, and condescension of the Holy Spirit in dwelling in us, and communicating the love and grace of God to us by various ways.

Therefore, we may be well said to grieve him. And certainly this consideration, together with that of the vile ingratitude and horrible folly in neglecting and defiling his dwelling-place — with the danger of his withdrawing from us on the continuance of our provocation [8] — ought to be as effectual a motive for universal holiness and constant watchfulness in this, as any that can be proposed to us.

(3.) There are some sins which, in a special manner and above others, grieve the Holy Spirit. Our apostle expressly discusses these in 1Cor 6.15-20. [9] And, by the connection of the words in this passage, he seems to consider "corrupt communication" (which always has a tendency toward corrupt conduct) a sin of this nature, Eph 4.29-30. [10]

Secondly. That which we have rendered [11] to "vex him," Isa 63.10, is but the heightening and aggravation of his being grieved by our continuance in it, and maybe obstinacy [12] in those ways by which he is grieved. For this is the progression of these things: if those whom we are concerned with (such as our children or other relationships), fall into miscarriages and sins, we are first grieved by it. This grief is attended with pity and compassion towards them, and with an earnest endeavor for their recovery. But if they continue to go on frowardly in their ways, notwithstanding all our endeavors and the application of means for reducing them, then are we *vexed* at them. This includes an addition of anger and indignation to our former sorrow or grief. Yet in this posture of things, we do not cease to attempt their cure for a season. If this does not succeed, but they continue in their obstinacy, then we resolve to deal with them no more, but to leave them to themselves. [13] And not only this, but being convinced of their resolve to continue in ways of sin and debauchery, we deal with them as their enemies, and we labor to bring them to punishment.

For our better understanding of the nature of our sin and provocation, this whole scheme of things is ascribed to the Holy Ghost with respect to them. It has been declared how he is said to be "grieved," and on what occasion. On continuing in those ways with which he is grieved, he is said to be "vexed," so that we may understand there is also anger and displeasure towards us. Yet he does not forsake us; yet he does not take from us the means of grace and recovery.

But if we discover an obstinacy in our ways, and an intractable perverseness, then he will cast us off, and deal with us no more for our recovery. And woe to us when he departs from us! So when the old world would not be brought to repentance by the dispensation of the Spirit of Christ in the preaching of Noah, 1Pet 3.19-20, God said upon that, that his Spirit would give up, and "not always strive with man," Gen 6.3. Now, the cessation of the operations of the Spirit towards men who are obstinate in ways of sin, after he has long been grieved and vexed, comprises three things:

1. Removing from them the means of grace, either totally by the removal of their light and candlestick, of all the ways of the revelation of the mind and will of God to them, Rev 2.5; or as to the *efficacy* of the word towards them, where the outward dispensation of it is continued — so that, "hearing they will hear, but not understand," Isa 6.9, Joh 12.40. For it is by the word that he strives with the souls and minds of men.

2. A forbearance of all chastisement, out of a gracious design to heal and recover them, Isa 1.5. [14]

3. Giving them up to themselves, or leaving them to their own ways. Though it seems only a consequence of the two former ones, and is to be included in them, yet there is indeed a positive act of the anger and

displeasure of God in it, which directly influences the event of things. For they will be so given up to their own hearts' lusts as to be bound in them as in "chains of darkness" for subsequent judgment. [15]

But this is not all. At length, He becomes a professed enemy to such obstinate sinners: Isa 63.10, "They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." This is the length of his proceeding against obstinate sinners in this world. And in this too, four things are included:

1. He comes upon them as an enemy, to spoil them. [16] This is the first thing that an enemy does when he comes to fight against anyone; he spoils them of what they have. If such persons had any light or conviction, any gift or spiritual abilities, the Holy Spirit having now become their professed enemy, he spoils them of it all: "From the one who does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken away." Mat 25.29 Seeing that he neither had nor used his gifts or talent to any saving end, and now being at open enmity with the one who lent it to him, it will be taken away.

2. He will come upon them with spiritual judgments, striking them with blindness of mind and obstinacy of will, filling them with folly, giddiness, and madness in their ways of sin; which sometimes will produce the most doleful effects in themselves and others.

3. He will cast them out of his territories. If they have been members of churches, he will order that they will be cut off, and thrown out of them.

4. He frequently gives them a foretaste in this world, of that everlasting vengeance which is prepared for them.

Such are those horrors of conscience, and other terrible effects of an utter desperation, which he justly, righteously, and holily sends upon the minds and souls of some of them. And he will do these things to demonstrate the

greatness and holiness of his nature, and so that all may know what it means to despise his goodness, kindness, and love.

And it belongs to us to consider these things. It is our wisdom and duty to consider the ways and degrees of the Spirit's departure from sinners who provoke, as well as those ways and degrees of his approaches to us with love and grace.

These latter approaches have been largely considered by many, as to all his great works towards us; and that was to the great advantage and edification of those concerned in them. For they learned from there, both their own state and condition, and also what particular duties they were to apply themselves to on all occasions. We showed this before, in part, in our discourses about regeneration and sanctification.

And it is of no less concern to us to rightly consider the ways and degrees of his departure, which are expressed to give us that godly fear and reverence with which we ought to consider and observe him. David upon his sin, feared nothing more than God taking his holy Spirit from him, Psa 51.11. And the fear of this should influence us to the utmost care and diligence against sin. For although God would not utterly forsake us — which, as to those who are true believers, is contrary to the tenor, promise, and grace of the new covenant — yet he may so withdraw his presence from us, that we may spend the remainder of our days in trouble, and our years in darkness and sorrow. Therefore, "Let him who thinks he stands," on this account also "take heed lest he fall." 1Cor 10.12 There are those with whom God is only at the entrance of his work, as it were, producing such effects in their minds that, if followed and attended to, might have a saving event. Yet, upon their provocations, he may utterly forsake them, in the way and by the degrees mentioned before.

First, therefore, it is the duty of all to serve God with fear and trembling on this account. And —

Secondly. It is to take heed of the very beginnings of the course described. Have there been such evils in any of us, that it is evident that the Spirit is *grieved* by them? As we love our souls, we are to take care that we do not *vex* him by continuing in them. And if we do not diligently and speedily recover ourselves from grieving him, then vexing him will ensue. Has he been grieved by our negligence in our duties, by our indulgence of any lust, or by compliance with or conformity to the world? Do not let our continuance in doing so, make it his vexation.

Remember that while he is only grieved, he continues to supply us with all due means for our healing and recovery. He will also do so when he is vexed; but he will do it with such a mixture of anger and displeasure as to make us know that what we have done is an evil thing and bitter. But have there been any who proceeded further, and long continued to vex him this way, refusing his instructions even when accompanied, it may be, with sore afflictions or inward distresses that have been evident tokens of his displeasure? Let such souls rouse themselves to lay hold on him, for he is ready to depart, maybe forever. And —

Thirdly. We may do well to much consider the miserable condition of those who are thus utterly forsaken by him. When we see a man who has lived in a plentiful and flourishing condition, brought to extreme penury and want, seeking his bread in rags from door to door, the spectacle is sad — even though we know he brought this misery on himself by profuseness [17] or a debauched life. [18] But how sad it is to think of a man whom, it may be, we knew to have had a great light and conviction — to have made an amiable profession of Christ, to have been adorned with

various useful spiritual gifts, and who was esteemed on this account — now to be despoiled of all his ornaments, to have lost light, and life, and gifts, and profession, and to lie as a poor withered branch on the dunghill of the world! And the sadness of this will be increased when we consider not only that the Spirit of God has departed from him, but that the Spirit has also become his enemy, and fights against him, by which the man is devoted to irrecoverable ruin.

1. Μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

2. τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιον.

3. וְהֵמָּה מָרוּ וְעִצְּבוּ אֶת־רוּחַ קָדְשׁוֹ. [OT:06087 *'atsab* – to vex or grieve].

4. παροξύνω.

5. παραπικραίνω [NT:3893 *rebelled*] (Heb 3.16); and παραπικρασμός [NT:3894 rebellion] (Heb 3.8).

6. LXX λυπέω [NT:3076] to sorrow or grieve, as in Mat 27.37.

7. **Eph 4:30-31** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

8. **Psa 51:11** Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

9. **1Cor 6:15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not! [16] Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with her*? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." [17] But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. [18] Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? [20] For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

10. **Eph 4:29** Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. [30]

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

11. *Render*: to give back in return for something valuable.

12. *Obstinacy*: resolute adherence to your own ideas or desires.

13. **1Cor 5:9-12** I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. [10] Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. [11] But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner-- not even to eat with such a person. [12] For what *have* I *to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

14. **Isa 1:5** Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints.

15. **Rom 1:26,28** For this reason God gave them up to vile passions… [28] And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; **2Pe 2:4** For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into **chains of darkness**, to be reserved for judgment;

16. *Spoil*: to destroy and strip of possession.

17. *Profuseness*: to pour out; to give or spend liberally; to lavish or squander.

18. *Debauched*: Indulging in sensual pleasures to a degree that is morally harmful; corrupted; immoral; self-indulgent.

Book IX. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 2.

Monergism Books

Book IX. The Holy Spirit and His Work. Pt. 2.

A DISCOURSE — OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

Chapter I. Spiritual gifts, their names and meaning.

The second part of the *dispensation of the Spirit, in* order to perfect the new creation or for the edification of the church, consists in his *communication of spiritual gifts* to its members, as their places and stations in it require. [1]

By his work of *saving grace* (which we have given a large account of in other discourses), he makes all the elect *living stones.*[1Pet 2.5] And by his communication of *spiritual gifts*,[1Cor 12.1] he fashions and builds those stones into *a temple for the living God* to dwell in.[2Cor 6.16]

By faith and love, he spiritually unites them into one *mystical body* under the Lord Christ, as a *head of influence*. And by gifts and spiritual abilities, he unites them into an *organic body* under the Lord Christ, as a *head of rule*.[Eph 1.22]

Their *nature* is made one and the same by grace; but their *use* is various by gifts. [2]

Every member is a part of the body of Christ, of the *essence* of it, by the same quickening, animating Spirit of grace. But in the body, one is an *eye*,

another a *hand*, another a *foot*, by virtue of particular gifts: for "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph 4.7.

These *gifts* are not saving, sanctifying graces. Neither were those *extraordinary* and *miraculous* gifts which made the most glorious and astonishing appearance in the world, and which were most eminently useful in the foundation of the church and the propagation of the gospel. There is something of the *divine nature* in the *least grace*, that is not found in the most *glorious gift*, which is only a gift. It will therefore be part of our work to show what the essential difference between these *gifts* and sanctifying *graces* consists in. And it must also be inquired into, what their nature and *use* is. For although they are not grace, the church cannot subsist in the world without them; nor can believers be useful to one another and to the rest of mankind, as they ought to be, to the glory of Christ. These gifts are the "powers of the world to come" — those effectual operations of the power of Christ by which his kingdom was erected and is preserved.

And hereby the church-state under the *New Testament* is differenced from that under the *Old*. There is, indeed, a great difference between their *ordinances* and ours — theirs being suited to the dark apprehensions which they had of spiritual things; ours accommodated to the clearer *light of the gospel*, more plainly and expressly representing heavenly things to us, Heb 10.1. [3] But *our* ordinances, [obeyed] with *their* spirit, would be *carnal also. The* principal difference lies in the *administration of the Spirit* for the due performance of gospel worship by virtue of these gifts, bestowed on men for that very end. Hence, the whole of *evangelical worship* is called the "ministration of the Spirit;" and from this it is said to be "glorious," 2Cor 3.8. And where these gifts are neglected, I do not see the advantage of the outward worship and ordinances of the gospel above those of the law. For

although their institutions are accommodated to that administration of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, they must lose their whole glory, force, and efficacy, if they are not dispensed and their duties performed by virtue of these *spiritual gifts*. And, therefore, no sort of men by whom these gifts are neglected, can content themselves with the pure and unmixed gospel institutions in these things.[4] Rather, they would rest principally in the outward part of divine service, in things of their own invention. For just as *gospel gifts* are useless without attending to *gospel institutions*, so *gospel institutions* are found to be fruitless and unsatisfactory without attaining and exercising *gospel gifts*.

This being so, these *gifts* we intend are not *saving graces* in themselves; yet they are not to be despised. For they are, as we will show, the "powers of the world to come," by means of which the kingdom of Christ is preserved, carried on, and propagated in the world. And although they are not grace, they are the great means by which all grace is ingenerated and exercised. And although the *spiritual life* of the church does not consist in them, the *order and edification* of the church wholly depend on them. And therefore, they are frequently mentioned in the Scripture as the great privilege of the New Testament. Directions are multiplied in the writings of the apostles about their nature and proper use. And we are commanded to earnestly desire and labor after them, especially those which are most useful and subservient to *edification*, 1Cor 12.31. The power of godliness consists in *internal saving grace*. The neglect of this *grace* has been the bane of Christian profession as to obedience, resulting in that form of profession which encompasses all manner of lusts. So too, the neglect of these *gifts* has been the ruin of that same profession as to *worship* and *order*; such neglect has resulted in foolish superstition.

The great and signal promise of the communication of these gifts is recorded in Psa 68.18: "You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive: you have received gifts for men." For these words are applied by the apostle to that communication of *spiritual gifts* from Christ by which the church was founded and edified, Eph 4.8. And because it is foretold in the psalm, that Christ would *receive gifts* — that is, to *give them to men*, as that expression is expounded by the apostle — so he did this by *receiving the Spirit*, which is the proper cause and immediate author of them all. Peter declares this in Acts 2.33: "Therefore, being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this, which you now see and hear." He was speaking of the miraculous gifts conferred on the apostles at the day of Pentecost. For these gifts are from Christ, not as God absolutely, but as mediator; in this capacity he received all from the Father in a way of free donation. Therefore, he thus received the *Spirit* as the author of all *spiritual gifts*. All the "powers of the world to come" consisted in them, and the whole work of the building and propagation of the church depended on them. Therefore, after all the instructions they received from Christ while he conversed with them in the days of his flesh, and also after his resurrection, the apostles were commanded not to go about the great work for which they were commissioned, until they had received power by the Holy Ghost coming upon them in the communication of those gifts, Acts 1.4, 8. They neither might nor could do anything in their particular work, as to laying the foundation of the Christian church, until they had actually received those *extraordinary gifts* which gave them power to do so. So too — in any place, degree, or orifice [5] — if those who undertake to carry on the edification of the church, do not receive those more *ordinary gifts* which are continued to

that end, they have neither the *right* to undertake that work, nor the *power* to perform it in a due manner.

The things which we are to inquire into concerning these gifts are — I. Their *name*; II. Their *nature* in general, and how they agree with and differ from saving graces; III. Their *distinction*; IV. Their *particular nature*; and V. Their use in the church of God.

The general *name* of those spiritual endowments which we intend is *domata*, [6] Eph 4.8 — thus the apostle renders *mattanah* [7] from Psa 68.18, as *dona*, gifts; that is, they are free and undeserved effects of divine bounty. In the minds of those men on whom they are bestowed, they are spiritual powers and endowments with respect to a certain end; but as to their original and principal cause, they are free and *undeserved gifts*.

Hence the Holy Spirit, as the author of them, and with respect to them, is called, "The gift of God," Joh 4.10. [8] And the effect itself is also termed, "The gift of the Holy Ghost," Act 10.45; [9] — "The gift of God," Act 8.20; "The gift of the grace of God," Eph 3.7; "The gift of Christ," Eph 4.7; "The heavenly gift," Heb 6.4; — all expressing the freedom of their communication on the part of the Father, Son, and Spirit. In like manner, and on the same account, they are called *charismata* [10] — that is, "gracious largesses," gifts proceeding from mere bounty. And therefore *saving graces* are also expressed by the same name in general, because they also are *freely* and *undeservedly* communicated to us, Rom 11.29. But those gifts are frequently and almost constantly expressed as *charismata*: Rom 12.6; 1Cor 1.7, 7.7, 12.4, 9, 28, 30; 2Tim 1.6; 1Pet 4.10.

What is principally intended in this term, is *absolute freedom* in their bestower. Hence the one who thought this *free gift* of God might be "purchased with money," has left his name as a curse unto all posterity. [11]

The apostate ages of the church erected a *pageantry* of this crime, in applying the *name of that sin* to the *purchase of benefices and dignities*, [12] while the *gift of God* was equally despised on all hands. And in all ages, indeed, countenance was given to apostasy and defection from the power and truth of the gospel. The *names* of spiritual things were still retained, but they were applied to outward *forms and ceremonies.* Thereby they were substituted imperceptibly in their place, to the ruin of the gospel in the minds of men. But just as none of these gifts were to be *bought*, neither are they to be absolutely attained by the natural abilities and industry of anyone. By doing this, an *image* of them is attempted to be set up by some, but it is *deformed* and useless. They will do those things in the church by their own abilities, which can never be acceptably discharged except by virtue of those *free gifts* which they despise. We must speak of this more afterward. Now, the full meaning of these words in our sense is particular to the New Testament. For although they are used by other authors to mean a gift *or free grant*, they never denote the *endowments or abilities of the minds of men* who receive them, which is their principal sense in the Scripture.

With respect to their *special nature,* they are called *pneumatika*, [13] sometimes absolutely: 1Cor 12.1, "But concerning spirituals," — that is, *spiritual gifts*. [14] And again in 1Cor 14.1, "desire spirituals," — that is, *gifts*; [15] for so it is explained in 1Cor 12.31, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." [16] Whenever they are called *pneumatika*, therefore, the word *charismata* should be supplied there, denoting their *general nature*.

And where they are called *charismata* only, *pneumatika* is to be understood, as expressing their *special difference* from all others. They are neither *natural* nor *moral*, but *spiritual* endowments. For their *author,*

nature, and object, are respected in this — their *author* is the Holy Spirit; their *nature* is spiritual; and the *objects* about which they are exercised are *spiritual things*.

Again; with respect to the *manner* of their communication, they are called "distributions," or partitions "of the Holy Ghost," Heb 2.4. [17] The Holy Ghost is not the *subject* of these, as though he were parted or divided, as the *Socinians* dream of in this verse; rather, he is the *author* of them — they are the distributions which he makes. And thus they are called divisions, partitions, or distributions, because they are of diverse sorts and kinds, as the edification of the church required. And all of them were not at any time given out to any one person (at least not exclusively), such that others would not be made partakers of the same sort. From the same inexhaustible treasure of bounty, grace, and power, these gifts are variously distributed to men. And this variety, as the apostle proves, gives both ornament and advantage to the church: "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?" etc., 1Cor 12.14-25. It is this *merismos*, [18] this *various distribution* of gifts, that makes the church an *organic* body. And in this composure, with the particular uses of the members of the body, consist the harmony, beauty, and safety of the whole. If there were no more than *one gift*, or only gifts *of one sort*, the whole body would be but one member — just as where there is none, there is no animated body, but only a dead carcass.

And this varied distribution, because it is an act of the Holy Spirit, produces " diversities of gifts," 1Cor 12.4. [19] The *gifts* thus distributed in the church are *diverse* as to their sorts and kinds, one of one kind, another of another kind. An account of this is particularly given by the apostle in verses 8-10, in a distinct enumeration of the sorts or kinds of them. [20] The

edification of the church is the general end of them all; but *diverse, distinct, different gifts* are required for this. These gifts being bestowed, they are variously expressed with regard to the nature and manner of these operations which we are enabled for, by virtue of the gifts. So are they termed "ministrations," 1Cor 12.5 [21] — that is, powers and abilities by which some are enabled to *administer* spiritual things to the benefit, advantage, and edification of others; and verse 6, "effectual workings" [22] or operations, efficaciously producing the effects which they are applied to; and lastly, they are comprised by the apostle in that expression, "The manifestation of the Spirit," verse 7. [23]

In and by these gifts, the Holy Spirit evidences and manifests his power. For the effects produced by them, and the gifts in their own nature (especially some of them), evince that the Holy Spirit is in them, that they are given and worked by him, and that they are the ways by which he acts his own power and grace.

These things are spoken in the Scripture as to the *name* of these spiritual gifts. And it is evident that if we part with our interest and concern in them, we must part with no small portion of the New Testament. For the mention of them, and directions about their use and abuse, so frequently occur, that if we are not concerned in them, we are not concerned in the gospel.

1. **1Cor 12:11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. **Eph 4:11** And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ… [16] from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.
2. That is, the nature and use of the members of Christ's body.
3. **Heb 10:1** For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.
4. *Gospel institutions*: institutions of worship in the New Testament, bounded by the Second Commandment, which include church fellowship, order, ministry, baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer, preaching, hearing, etc. And from these flow our gospel duties. Owen ties those duties to the Spirit's gifts, distributed according to His will. – WHG
5. *Orifice*: an opening. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread" (Alexander Pope, *Criticism*, 1711).
6. δόματα [NT:1390] – *gifts*.
7. מַתָּנוֹת [OT:04979] – *gifts*.
8. Δωρεὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ. *Doorea ton Theou.*
9. Δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος. *Doorea ton hagiou Pneumatos*.

10. χαρίσματα [NT:5486] – *gifts*. **Rom 12:6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*:
11. **Act 8:20** That is, "simony." — [18] And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, [19] saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." [20] But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! [21] "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.
12. *Benefice* or *dignity*: An endowed church office giving income to its holder.
13. πνευματικά [NT:4152] – *pneumatika – spirituals*.
14. Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν. *Peri de toon pneumatikoon.*
15. Ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά. *Zeloute ta pneumatika*.
16. Ζηλοῦτε τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ κρείττονα. *Zeloute ta charismata*.
17. μερισμοὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἁγίου. *Merismoi tou Pneumatos hagiou*.
18. μερισμός [NT:3311] – *merismos – distribution*.
19. διαίρεσιν· Διαρέσεις χαρισμάτων εἰσί. *diairesin Diareseis charismatoon eisi*.
20. **1Cor 12:8** for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, [9] to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.
21. διακονίας [NT:1248] – *diakonias – services, ministries*.
22. ἐνεργήματα [NT:1755] – *energemata – workings or activities*.

23. Φανέρωσις τοῦ Πνεύματος, *Phaneroosis tou Pneumatos*.

Chapter II. Differences between spiritual gifts and saving grace.

Their *nature in general* , which we inquire into next, will be much revealed in the consideration of those things in which these gifts agree with *saving graces*, and those in which they differ.

First. There are four things in which *spiritual gifts* and *saving graces* agree:

1. Both sorts are the *purchase of Christ* for his church, the special fruit of his mediation. We are not speaking of those gifts or endowments of men's minds, which consist merely in the improvement of their natural faculties: such are *wisdom, learning,* and *skill in arts and sciences*. These may abound and excel in those who are utter strangers to the church of Christ, and frequently they do, to their own exaltation and the contempt of others. Nor do I intend abilities for actions, whether moral, civil, or political — such as *fortitude, skill in government or rule*, and the like. For although these are gifts of the power of the Spirit of God, they belong to those operations which he exercises in upholding or ruling the world, or the old creation as such, which I have treated before. But I intend those gifts alone

which surround the *gospel*, the things and duties of the gospel, the *administration* of its ordinances, the propagation of its doctrine, and the profession of its ways. And herein I also differentiate between these, and all those gifts of the Spirit about sacred things, which any of the people of God enjoyed under the Old Testament — for we speak only of those gifts which are "powers of the world to come." Heb 6.5 Those others were suited to the economy of the old covenant, and they were confined by the light which God was then pleased to communicate to his church. They were not suited to the *gospel state*, nor would they be useful in it.

Hence the prophets, who had the most eminent gifts, all of them, still came short of John the Baptist because they did not have, by virtue of their gifts, that acquaintance with the person of Christ, and that insight into his work of mediation, that the Baptist had. And yet, he too came short of the one who is "least in the kingdom of heaven," Mat 11.11 because his gifts were not purely *evangelical*. Therefore, those gifts which we treat, are those which belong to the kingdom of God, erected in a special manner by Jesus Christ after his ascension into heaven. For he was exalted that he might *fill all things*, [1] that is, fill the whole church with these effects of his power and grace. Therefore, the power of communicating these gifts was granted by the Father to the Lord Christ, as mediator, for the foundation and edification of his church, as it is expressed in Acts 2.33. [2] And by these gifts, his kingdom was both set up, propagated, and preserved in the world. These were the weapons of warfare with which he furnished his disciples when he commissioned them to go out and *subdue the world* to the obedience of the gospel, Act 1.4, 8; [3] and they were *mighty* through God for that purpose, 2Cor 10.3-6. In the use and exercise of these gifts, the gospel would "run and be glorified," 2Thes 3.1 to the ruin of the kingdom of Satan and darkness

in the world. And the fact that Satan was ever able to erect it again, under another form than *Gentilism* (as he has done in the *antichristian* apostasy of the visible church), was from a neglect and contempt of these gifts, of their due use and improvement. When men began to neglect attaining these spiritual gifts, and exercising them in praying, preaching, and interpreting the Scripture, in all the administrations and whole worship of the church — resorting wholly to their own abilities and inventions, accommodated to their ease and secular interest — it was an easy thing for Satan to erect his kingdom again. Yet it was not erected in the old manner, because the light of the Scripture had made an impression on the minds of men, which Satan could not obliterate. Therefore, he never attempted openly any more to set up *Heathenism* or *Paganism*, with the gods of the old world and their worship. But he imperceptibly raised another kingdom, which pretended some likeness to and compliance with the *letter of the word* — though it came at last to be expressly contrary to this in all things. This was his kingdom of *apostasy and darkness*, under the *papal antichristianism* and the woeful degeneracy of other Christians in the world. For when men who pretend to be entrusted with the *preservation of the kingdom of Christ*, wilfully cast away those weapons of their warfare by which the world was subdued to Christ, and by which it should have been kept in subjection to him by those weapons, what else could ensue?

By these gifts, I say, the Lord Christ demonstrates his power and exercises his rule. External force and carnal weapons were far from his thoughts, as unbecoming both to his absolute sovereignty over the souls of men, and to his infinite power and holiness. Nor did anyone ever resort to them in the affairs of Christ's kingdom, except when they had either utterly lost and abandoned these spiritual weapons, or they did not believe they are

sufficient to maintain the interest of the gospel — even though, originally, they were sufficient to introduce and fix the gospel in the world. That is, even though the *gifts of the Holy Ghost* were sufficient and effectual to *bring in* the truth and doctrine of the gospel against all opposition, they are not believed to be sufficient to *maintain* it; they may do well to reconsider this. Therefore, these gifts agree with *saving graces* in this. For it is confessed by all that they are specially from Jesus Christ the mediator, except for those by whom all real internal grace is denied. But the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, with respect to the Lord Christ as mediator, have been sufficiently confirmed before.

2. There is an agreement between *saving graces* and *spiritual gifts* with respect to their *immediate efficient cause*. Both sorts are worked by the *power of the Holy Ghost*. As to what concerns saving grace, I have already addressed that argument at large; nor will any deny that the Holy Ghost is the author of these *graces*, except those who deny that there are any such. That these *gifts* are worked by him, is expressly declared wherever there is mention of them, in general or in particular. Therefore, when any acknowledge that there were such gifts, all confess that the Spirit was their author. Those who deny that he is the author, only do so because they deny the *continuance of any such gifts* in the church of God. But this is what we will disprove.

3. In this they also agree: that both sorts are designed for the *good, benefit, ornament*, and *glory* of the church. The church is the proper seat and subject of them; they are granted to it, and they reside in it. For Christ is given to be the "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all," Eph 1.22-23. But this "church" falls under a double consideration: first, as it is *believing*; and secondly, as it is

professing. In the first respect absolutely, it is the *invisible church*, and as such it is the particular subject of saving grace. This is that church which "Christ loved and gave himself for, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph 5.26-27. This is the work of saving grace; and by participating in this grace, men become *members of this church*, and not otherwise. Hereby the *professing* church is quickened and enabled to profess Christ in an acceptable manner. For the *elect* receive grace to this end in this world: that they may glorify Christ and the gospel in the exercise of it, Col 1.6; Joh 15.8. [4]

But gifts are bestowed on the professing church to render it *visible* in such a way that God is glorified by it. Grace gives an *invisible life* to the church; while gifts give it a *visible profession*. For from this, the church becomes *organic*, and it is disposed into that order which is beautiful and attractive. Where any church is *organized* merely by *outward rules*, perhaps of their own devising, and makes its profession only in attending to outward order — not following the leading of the Spirit in the communication of his gifts — it is but the *image* of a church. Both as to its order and in the discharge of its duties of profession, it lacks an animating principle and form. That profession which renders a church *visible* according to the mind of Christ, is the *orderly exercise of the spiritual gifts* bestowed on it, in a way of life that evidences the *invisible principle* of saving grace. Now, these gifts are conferred on the church for "the edification of itself in love," Eph 4.16; and also for the propagation of its profession in the world, as will be declared afterward. Therefore, both these sorts have in general the *same end*, or they are given by Christ for the same purpose — namely, the *good and benefit* of the church, as they are respectively suited to promote them.

4. It may also be added that they agree in this: that they both have the same respect to the *bounty of Christ*. Hence every *grace* is a *gift* — it is given and freely bestowed on those who have it, Mat 13.11; Phi 1.29. [5] And although, on the other side, every gift is not a grace, gifts are called graces because they proceed from gracious favor and bounty, Rom 12.6; Eph 4.7. [6] It will be declared afterward how they are mutually helpful and assist each other in their due exercise.

Secondly. We may consider in what things these *spiritual gifts, and sanctifying graces* differ: and this may be seen in various instances; such as —

1. Saving graces are the "fruit" [7] or fruits "of the Spirit," Gal 5.22; Eph 5.9; Phi 1.11. Now, *fruits* proceed from an *abiding root* and stock, of whose nature they partake. There must be a "good tree" to bring forth "good fruit," Mat 12.33. No external watering or applications to the earth will cause it to bring forth useful fruits, unless there are roots from which they spring and develop. The Holy Spirit is like the root to these fruits — the root which bears *them*, and which *they* do not bear, as in Rom 11.18. [8] Therefore, in order of nature, the Spirit is given to men before the production of any of these fruits. Thereby they are ingrafted into the olive, and are made such branches in Christ, the true vine, that they derive their vital juice, nourishment, and fructifying virtue from him, specifically by the Spirit.

So he is "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," Joh 4.14. He is a spring in believers; and all saving graces are but waters arising from that living, overflowing spring. From him — as a *root* or spring, as an eternal virtue, power, or principle — come all these *fruits*. To this end, he dwells in them and abides with them, according to the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, Joh 14.17; Rom 8.11; 1Cor 3.16. [9] By this, the Lord Christ

effects his purpose in "ordaining his disciples to bring forth fruit" that should "remain," Joh 15.16. In the place of his holy residence, he works these effects freely, according to his own will. And there is nothing that has the true nature of saving grace, except what is a *fruit of the Spirit*. We do not first have these *graces*, and then by virtue of them, receive the *Spirit* (for why should we have them of ourselves?). But the *Spirit* bestowed on us works them in us, and he gives them a *spiritual, divine nature* in conformity to his own.

With *gifts*, singly considered, it is otherwise. They are indeed *works and effects*, but not properly *fruits* of the Spirit; nor are they anywhere called fruits. They are *effects* of his operation *upon* men, not *fruits* of his working *in* them. And therefore many receive these gifts who never receive the Spirit as to the principal end for which he is promised. They do not receive him to sanctify and make them *temples* to God — though *metonymically*, with respect to his outward effects, they may be said to be made partakers of him. This renders them of a *different nature* and kind from saving graces. For though there is an agreement and coincidence between them in the respects mentioned before, and though the seat and subject of them is the *mind* — that is, the seat of gifts absolutely, and principally of graces also — the difference in their nature proceeds from the different manner of their communication from the Holy Spirit.

2. *Saving grace* proceeds from, or it is the effect and fruit of, *electing love*. I have proved this before, in our inquiry into the nature of holiness. See it directly asserted in Eph 1.3-4; 2Thes 2.13; Acts 2.47, 13.48. [10] Those whom God graciously chooses and designs for eternal life, he prepares for that life by communicating the means which are necessary to that end, Rom 8.28-30. [11] This sanctification, or the communication of saving grace, is

comprehensive; for we are "chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit," 2Thes 2.13. This is that by which we are "made fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col 1.12. The end of God in election is the *sonship and salvation* of the elect, "to the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph 1.5-6. And this cannot be, unless his *image* is renewed in them in holiness or saving graces. Therefore, he works these in them, in pursuit of his eternal purpose in this.

But *gifts*, on the other hand, which are no more than this, and where they are solitary or alone, [12] are only the effects of a temporary election. Thus God *chooses* some men for some office in the church, or for some *work* in the world. Because this includes preferring them before or above others, or using them when others are not used, we call it *election*; and in itself, it is their fitting for and separation to their office or work. This *temporary election* is the cause and rule of the *dispensation* of gifts. So God chose Saul to be king over his people, and gave him "another heart" upon that, or gifts fitting him for rule and government. So our Lord Jesus Christ chose and called *twelve* to be his apostles at first, and gave to them all alike, miraculous gifts. His *temporary choice* of them was the ground of his communication of gifts to them. By virtue of this, no saving graces were communicated to them, for one of them never arrived at partaking in them. "Have I not," says our Savior to them, "chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Joh 6.70. He had chosen them for their office, and endowed them with extraordinary gifts for the discharge of this office. But *one* of them, not being "chosen to salvation before the foundation of the world," 2Thes 2.13 not being "ordained to eternal life," Rom 7.10 but instead, being the "son of perdition," Joh 17.12 or one certainly appointed for destruction, or "of old ordained to that condemnation," Jud 1.4 he continued void of all

sanctifying graces; so that, as to any acceptance with God, he was in no better condition than the devil himself, whose work he was to do. Yet by virtue of this choice to the office of *apostleship* for a season, he was endowed with the same spiritual gifts that the others were. And our Savior himself plainly lays down this distinction; for though he says in Joh 6.70, "Have not I chosen you twelve," — that is, with a *temporary choice* to office —he says in Joh 13.18, "I do not speak of you all; I know whom I have chosen." Thus he excepts Judas from that number, as it is expressly declared afterward. For the *election* which he intends here, is that which is accompanied with an infallible ordination to abiding fruit-bearing, Joh 15.16 [13] — that is, *eternal* election, in which Judas had no interest.

And thus it is in general, and in other instances. When God chooses anyone to *eternal life*, he will communicate *saving grace* to him, in pursuit of that purpose. And although all believers have gifts that are also sufficient to enable them to discharge their duty in their station or condition in the church, these gifts do not depend on the *decree of election*. And where God calls or chooses anyone to an office, charge, or work in the church, he always furnishes him with gifts suited to their ends. He does not do this for any who would take an office for themselves; but he does this for all those whom he calls to this office. [14]

Indeed, his call is not otherwise known than by the *gifts* which he communicates for discharging the work or office to which any are called. In common use, I confess, all things run contrary to this. Most men [15] greatly insist on the necessity of an *outward call* to the office of the ministry; and to this extent, no doubt, they do well, for "God is the God of order" — that is, of His own order. But because they limit this outward call of theirs to certain persons, ways, modes, and ceremonies of their own — without

which, they will not admit that any man is rightly called to the ministry — they only contend to oppress the consciences [16] of others by their power and with their inventions. But their most pernicious mistake yet remains. So that persons have, or receive, an *outward call* in *their* mode and way — though what this has of a "call" in it I do not know — but they are not concerned whether these men are called by God or not. For they continually admit to their *outward call* those on whom God has bestowed no spiritual gifts to fit them for their office. For this reason, it is as evident as if written with the beams of the sun, that He never called them to it. They are as watchful as they are able, that God himself shall impose no one on them outside their way and order, or their *call*. For however excellently a man may be furnished with ministerial gifts, if he does not measure up to their call, they will do what lies in them to forever shut him out of the ministry. But they will impose upon God every day without his *call*. For if they *ordain* anyone to an office in their way — even if he has no more spiritual gifts than Balaam's ass — yet (if you believe them) Christ must accept him as his minister, whether He will or not. But let men dispose of things as they please, and as it seems good to them, Christ has no other order in this matter than this: "As everyone has received the gift, so let them minister, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," 1Pet 4.10, Rom 12.6-8. It is true that no man ought to take upon himself the *office* of the ministry. But unless and until he is solemnly *called* and set apart to this by the church, it is no less true that no church has either *rule* or *right* to call or set apart anyone to the ministry, whom Christ has not previously called by the communication of spiritual gifts that are necessary to the discharge of his office. These things must be largely insisted on afterward.

3. *Saving grace* is an effect of the *covenant*, and bestowed in the accomplishment and by virtue of the promises of this covenant. This has been declared elsewhere at large, where we addressed regeneration and sanctification. All those who are taken into this covenant are sanctified and made holy. There is no grace designed for any in the *eternal purpose of God*, none purchased or procured by the *mediation of Christ*, unless it is *comprised* in and *exhibited* by the promises of the covenant.

Therefore, only those who are taken into that covenant are made partakers of *saving grace*, and they are *all* made partakers. Things are not absolutely so with respect to *spiritual gifts*, though in some sense they also belong to the covenant: for the promises of the covenant are of two sorts —

(1.) Those which belong to the internal form and essence of it; and

(2.) Those which belong to its *outward administration* — that is, the ways and means by which its internal grace is made effectual.

Saving grace proceeds from the former; *gifts* relate to the latter; for all the promises of the *plentiful effusion of the Spirit* under the new testament, which are frequently applied to Him as he works and effects evangelical gifts in men, both extraordinary and ordinary, belong to the new covenant — not as to its internal essence and form, but as to its outward administration. And if you overthrow this distinction, so that the covenant is considered either with respect to its internal grace or its external administration, then everything in religion will be cast into confusion. Take away *internal grace, as* some do, and the whole is rendered a mere outside appearance; take away the *outward administration*, and all spiritual gifts, and the order which depends on that, must cease. But as it is possible that some may belong to the covenant with respect to *internal grace*, who are in no way taken into the external administration of it — such as elect infants

who die before they are baptized — so it is frequent that some may belong to the covenant with respect to its *outward administration*, by virtue of spiritual gifts, who are not made partakers of its inward effectual grace.

4. Saving grace has an immediate respect to the *priestly office of Jesus Christ*, with its discharge in his oblation and intercession. There is, I acknowledge, no gracious communication to men that respects any one office of Christ exclusive of the others. For his whole mediation has an influence into all that we receive from God in a way of favor or grace. And it is his person, as vested with all his offices, that is the immediate fountain of all grace to us. Yet something may (indeed, various things do) particularly respect some one of his offices, and they are the immediate effects of the virtue and efficacy of this office. Thus our *reconciliation* and peace with God is the particular effect of his *oblation*, which as a priest he offered to God. And so too, in like manner, is our *sanctification*, in which we are washed and cleansed from our sins in his blood, Eph 5.25-26; Tit 2.14. [17] Although grace is worked in us by the administration of the *kingly* power of Christ, it is done in pursuit of what he has done for us as a *priest*, and for making the fruits of his oblation and intercession effectual to us.

But gifts proceed solely from the regal office and power of Christ.They have a remote respect to and foundation in the death of Christ, in that they are all given and distributed to and for the good of that church which he purchased with his own blood; but immediately, gifts are the effects only of his *kingly* power. Hence, the authority to give and dispose of them is commonly put as a consequence of his exaltation at the right hand of God, or with respect to this exaltation, Mat 28.18; Acts 2.33. [18] The apostle declares this at large in Eph 4.7-8, 11-12. [19] Christ being exalted at the right hand of God; all power in heaven and earth being given to him; and he

being given as head over all things to the church; and having received for that end the promise of the Spirit from the Father; he gives out these gifts as it seems good to him. And the continuation of their communication is no small evidence of the continuance of the exercise of his kingdom. For besides the faithful testimony of the word to that purpose, there is a threefold evidence of it that we can experience:

(1.) His communication of saving grace in the regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of the elect; for Christ works these things immediately by his kingly power. And while there are any in the world who are savingly called and sanctified, he has not left himself without a witness to his kingly power over all flesh, on which he "gives eternal life to as many as the Father has given him," Joh 17.2. But this evidence is wholly invisible to the world; nor is the world capable of receiving it when tendered, because it cannot receive the Spirit, nor does it see or know him, Joh 14.17; nor are such things exposed to the judgment of sense or reason, 1Cor 2.9-10. [20]

(2.) Another evidence of this is given in the *judgments* that Christ executes in the world, and the outward protection which he affords to his church. On both these, there are evident impressions of the continued actual exercise of his divine power and authority. For in the judgments that he executes on persons and nations that either reject the gospel or persecute it, especially in some signal and uncontrollable instance, and also in the guidance, deliverance, and protection of his church, he manifests that though he was dead, yet he is alive, and has the keys of hell and of death.[Rev 1.18] Yet his power in these dispensations is largely hidden from the world at present, because he is pleased, on the one hand, to exercise great patience towards many of his open, stubborn adversaries (indeed, the greatest of

them), allowing them to walk and prosper in their own ways; on the other hand, he is pleased to leave his church to various trials and distresses.

(3.) The third evidence of the continuance of the administration of his mediatory kingdom, consists in his *dispensation of these spiritual gifts*, which are properly the *powers of the new world*. For such is their nature and use, such is the sovereignty that appears in their distribution, such is their distinction and difference from all natural endowments, that even the world cannot help but take notice of these gifts, though it violently hates and persecutes them; and the church is abundantly satisfied with the sense of the power of Christ in them.

Moreover, the principal end of these gifts is to enable the officers of the church to duly administer all the laws and ordinances of Christ for its edification. But all these laws and ordinances, all these offices and officers, he gives to the church as the Lord over his own house, as its sole sovereign lawgiver and ruler. [21]

5. Graces and gifts differ as to the *end* they may come to, even in this world, and often actually do. For all *gifts*, the best of them, in the highest degree to which they may be attained in this life, may be utterly lost or taken away. The *law* of their communication is that, the one who does not improve that *talent* or measure which he has received, it will be taken from him. For even if they are given for no other end than to *trade with*, [22] according to the several capacities and opportunities that men have in the church, or in their families, or in their own private exercise, if that is utterly neglected, to what end should these be left to rust and uselessness in the minds of any? Accordingly, we find this comes to pass: some neglect them, some reject them, and from both sorts they are judicially taken away. We have such among us. There are some who had received considerable

spiritual abilities for evangelical administrations. But after awhile they have fallen into an outward state of things in which, they suppose, they will have no *advantage* by them — indeed, that their exercise would turn to their *disadvantage*; and upon that, they wholly neglect them. By this means, they have imperceptibly decayed, until these men become as devoid of spiritual abilities as if they never experienced any assistance in that kind. They can no longer either pray, or speak, or evidence the power of the Spirit of God in anything for the edification of the church. "Their arm is dried up, and their right eye is utterly darkened," Zec 11.17. And they sometimes come to be sensible of this — indeed, they are ashamed of it; and yet they cannot retrieve themselves. Instead, for the most part, they fall into such a state that the profession and use of them become (they suppose) inconsistent with their present interest; and so they openly renounce all concern in them. Nor do they stop there, for the most part; but after they have rejected these gifts in themselves, and espoused *lazy, profitable*, outward helps in their place, they *blaspheme* the Author of these gifts in others. They declare them all to be delusions, fancies, and imaginations. And if anyone has the confidence to own the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the discharge of the duties of the gospel for the edification of the church, he becomes a scorn and reproach to them.[Psa 44.13]

These are the branches cut off from the Vine, whom men gather for the fire;[Joh 15.6] or those whose miserable condition is described by the apostle in Heb 6.4-6. [23] But one way or another, these gifts may be utterly lost or taken away from those who once received them, whether they are *ordinary* or *extraordinary* gifts. There is no kind of them, no degree of them, that can give us any security that they will always continue with us, or continue at all beyond our diligent attendance to their use and exercise.

With *saving grace*, this is not so. It is, indeed, subject to various decays in us; and its thriving or flourishing in our souls depends upon and corresponds to our diligent endeavor in the use of all ordinary means of holiness, 2Pet 1.5-10. [24] For just as no man can have the least evidence of anything of this grace in him if he is totally negligent in its exercise and improvement, so no man ought to expect that it will thrive or abound in him unless he constantly and diligently attends to it, and surrenders himself in all things to its conduct. And yet, as to the continuance of grace in the souls of the elect, as to the life and being of its principle, and its principal effect in habitual conformity to God and his will, it is secured in the covenant of grace.

6. On whomever *saving grace* is bestowed, it is bestowed firstly and principally for *himself* and his own good. It is a fruit of the special love and kindness of God to his own soul, Jer 31.3. [25] Both the nature and all the ends of it declare this. For saving grace is given to us to renew the *image of God in us*, to make us like him, to restore our nature, enable us to obedience, and to make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Yet we must take heed not to think that grace is bestowed on believers *merely for themselves*; for indeed, grace is that in which God designs a good for all: "Vir bonus commune bonum" [26] — "A good man is a good to all;" Mic 5.7. [27] And therefore, in the communication of *saving grace* to anyone, God has a threefold regard for others, which it is the duty of those who receive it, to diligently consider and attend to:

(1.) He intends to give an example by it, of what His will is, and what He approves of. And therefore, he requires of those in whom saving grace abides, those fruits of holy obedience that may express the example of a holy life in the world, according to the will of God and to his glory. By this

He furthers the salvation of the elect, 1Pet 3.1-2; 1Cor 7.16;[28] convinces the unbelieving world at present, 1Pet 2.12, 15, 3.16;[29] condemns it hereafter, Heb 11.7;[30] and He is glorified, Mat 5.16.[31] Let no man therefore think that, because grace is first and principally given to him for *himself* and for his own spiritual advantage, he need not also account for it with respect to those other designs of God. Indeed, in the exercise of what he esteems grace, the one who regards only himself, gives evidence that he never had any grace that was genuine and of the right kind.

(2.) Hence, fruitfulness for the benefiting of others is also expected. Holy obedience, the effect of saving grace, is frequently expressed in the Scripture by *fruits and fruitfulness*. See Col 1.10.[32] And these fruits, or the things which others are to feed on and to be sustained by, are to be born by the *plants of the Lord, the trees of righteousness*.[Isa 61.3] The fruits of *love, charity, bounty, mercy, wisdom*, are those fruits by which grace is rendered useful in the world, and is taken notice of as that which is lovely and desirable, Eph 2.10.[33]

(3.) God requires that, by the exercise of *grace*, the doctrine of the gospel is adorned and propagated. This doctrine is from God; our profession is avowing that it is from God. The world does not know what it is, but takes its measure of it from what it observes in those by whom it is professed. And it is the unprofitable, brutal lives of Christians that have almost thrust the gospel out of the world with contempt. But the care that it be *adorned*, that it be *glorified*, is committed by God to everyone on whom he bestows the least saving grace; and this is to be done only by the guidance of holy conduct in conformity to that grace. And there are many other such blessed ends in which God has respect to the good and advantage of other men, in the collation of saving grace upon anyone. If gracious persons are not more

useful than others, in all things that may have a real benefit in them for mankind, it is their sin and shame.

Yet, after all, grace is principally and in the first place given to men for themselves, for their own good and spiritual advantage, out of love for their souls, and in order for their eternal blessedness; all other effects are but secondary ends of it.

But as to these *spiritual gifts*, it is quite otherwise. They are not in the first place bestowed on anyone for their own *sakes* or their own good, but for the good and benefit of *others*. So the apostle expressly declares in 1Cor 12.7, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with." [34] These gifts, by which the Spirit evidences and manifests his power, are bestowed on men for this very end: that they may profit and benefit others in their edification. And yet, also, where they are duly improved, they tend much to the spiritual advantage of those on whom they are bestowed, as we will see afterward. Therefore, as *grace* is primarily given to us for ourselves, and secondarily for the good of others, so *gifts* are bestowed in the first place for the edification of others, and secondly for our own spiritual advantage also.

7. The principal difference between them is in their *nature* and kind, revealing itself in the different *subjects, operations*, and *effects* of each; for those already insisted on are principally from external causes and considerations. And —

(1.) As to their different *subjects*, *spiritual gifts are* placed and seated in the *mind* or in the understanding only. Whether they are ordinary or extraordinary, they have no other hold or residence in the soul. And they are in the mind as it is *notional* and theoretical, rather than as it is *practical*. They are *intellectual abilities*, and no more. I speak of those which have

any residence in us; for some *gifts, such as miracles* and *tongues, consisted* only in a *transient operation* of an extraordinary power. *Illumination* is the foundation of all others, and spiritual light is their matter. So the apostle declares in his order of expression in Heb 6.4.[35] The will, and the affections, and the conscience are unconcerned in them. Therefore, they *do not change the heart* with power, although they may reform the life by the efficacy of light. And although God does not ordinarily bestow them on flagitious persons,[36] nor continue these gifts with those who become flagitious after receiving them, yet they may be found in those who are unrenewed, and have nothing in them to preserve men absolutely from the worst of sins.

But saving grace possesses the *whole soul*; men are thereby sanctified throughout, in the whole "spirit and soul and body," 1Thes 5.23, as has been declared at large. Not only is the *mind* savingly enlightened, but there is a principle of spiritual life infused into the whole soul, enabling it in all its powers and faculties to act obedientially to God, a principle whose nature has been fully explained elsewhere. Hence —

(2.) They differ in their *operations*: for grace changes and transforms the whole soul into its own nature, Isa 11.6-8; Rom 6.17, 12.2; 2Cor 3.18.[37] It is a new, divine nature for the soul; it is a habit in it that disposes, inclines, and enables the soul to obedience. It acts itself in *faith, love*, and *holiness* in all things.

But *gifts*, of themselves, do not have this power, nor these operations. They may and do, in those who possess them, in and under their exercise, make a great impression on their own affections. But they do not change the heart; they do not renew the mind; they do not transform the soul into the image of God. Hence, where *grace* is predominant, every notion of light

and truth which is communicated to the mind, is immediately turned into practice, by having the whole soul cast into its mould. Where only *gifts* bear sway, the use of it in duties for edification is best — that for which it is designed.[1Cor 14.12]

(3.) As to *effects* or consequents, the great difference is on the part of Christ. Christ dwells and resides in our hearts by grace. Concerning many of those who have been made partakers of these *other* spiritual endowments, he may say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." But he will not say this of anyone whose soul he has inhabited.[Mat 7.23]

These are some of the principal *agreements and differences* between *saving graces* and *spiritual gifts*, both sorts being worked in believers by "that one and the self-same Spirit, which divides to every one severally as he will." [1Cor 12.11]

And for a close to this discourse I will only add that where these *graces* and *gifts* are bestowed on the same persons, in any eminence or good degree, they are exceedingly helpful to each other. A soul sanctified by saving grace is the only proper soil for gifts to flourish in. Grace influences gifts to a due-exercise, prevents their abuse, stirs them up for proper occasions, keeps them from being a matter of pride or contention, and subordinates them in all things to the glory of God. God is glorified and our own salvation is promoted, when the actings of *grace* and *gifts* are inseparable; when in prayer the Spirit is a Spirit of grace and supplication, the grace and gift of it working together; when utterance in other duties is always accompanied with faith and love. Edifying gifts have a beauty and luster on them, and generally are most successful, when they are clothed and adorned with humility, meekness, a reverence of God, and compassion for the souls of men. Indeed, when there is no evidence, no manifestation of

their being accompanied with these and like graces, they are like a *parable* or a wise saying, in the mouth of a fool.

Gifts, on the other side, excite and stir up *grace* to its proper exercise and operation. How often faith, love, and delight in God, is excited and drawn out to special exercise in believers, by the use of their own gifts!

And this much may suffice as to the nature of these gifts in general. We next consider them under their most general distributions.

1. τὰ πάντα.
2. **Act 2:33** "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.
3. **Act 1:4** And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me… [8] "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
4. **Col 1:6** which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; **Joh 15:8** "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.
5. **Mat 13:11** He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. **Phi 1:29** For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake;
6. **Rom 12:6** Having then **gifts** differing according to the **grace** that is given to us, *let us use them*; **Eph 4:7** But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.
7. καρπός *karpos* [NT:2590].
8. **Rom 11:17-18** And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the

branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root *supports* you.

9. **Joh 14:17** "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. **Rom 8:11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. **1Cor 3:16** Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

10. **Eph 1:3** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, [4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; **2Thes 2:13** But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth; **Act 2:47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved [KJV: "such as should be saved"]. **Act 13:48** Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

11. **Rom 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. [29] For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30] Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

12. That is, where they are not accompanied by saving grace.
13. **Joh 15:16** "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.
14. **Heb 5:4** And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*.
15. That is, most clergy.
16. To *bind* their consciences. The Westminster Confession of Faith (20.2), teaches that "God alone is Lord of the conscience." To bind the consciences of believers only on the basis of human wisdom or preference, is to usurp His rule. – WHG
17. **Eph 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, [26] that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word; **Tit 2:14** who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.
18. **Mat 28:18** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Act 2:33** "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.
19. **Eph 4:7** But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. [8] Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." **Eph 4:11** And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;

20. **Joh 14:17** "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; **1Cor 2:9** But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." [10] But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

21. **Eph 1:22** And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church; **Eph 4:11** And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;

22. **Mat 25:14-29;** "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents." (v. 16)

23. **Heb 6:4** For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, [5] and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, [6] if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

24. **2Pet 1:5** But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, [6] to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, [7] to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. [8] For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. [10] Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

25. **Jer 31:3** The LORD has appeared of old to me, *saying*: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

26. This may be a quote from Tullius Cicero (106 BC–43 BC), *De Officiis – The Offices*, 44 B.C. Bk III, sec. 19. Often translated, "a good man is one who does all the good that he can to others."

27. **Mic 5:7** "Then the remnant of Jacob Shall be in the midst of many peoples, Like dew from the LORD, Like showers on the grass."

28. **1Pet 3:1** Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. **1Cor 7:16** For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save *your* husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save *your* wife?

29. **1Pet 2:12** having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. **1Pet 2:15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. **1Pet 3:15** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; [16] having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

30. **Heb 11:7** By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

31. **Mat 5:16** "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
32. **Col 1:10** that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
33. **Eph 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
34. In the NKJ, NIV, NAS, and ESV, "for all" or "for the common good" is taken from the Greek συμφέρον (NT:4851, *sumphero*), meaning "to bring or gather together," and by inference, "to profit with" as it is in the KJV.
35. **Heb 6:4-5** For *it is* impossible for those who were (1) once enlightened, and (2) have tasted the heavenly gift, and (3) have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and (4) have tasted the good word of God and (5) the powers of the age to come…
36. *Flagitious*: Extremely wicked, deeply criminal.
37. **Isa 11:6** "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. [7] The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. [8] The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. **Rom 6:17** But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. **Rom 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. **2Cor 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Chapter III. Of extraordinary gifts and offices; first, of offices.

The spiritual gifts which we address, respect either *powers* and *duties* in the church, or else *duties* only. Gifts that respect *powers* and *duties* are of two sorts — or there have been (or are at any time) two sorts of such *powers* and *duties*. The first of these was *extraordinary*, and the latter *ordinary.* And consequently, the gifts that are subservient to them must also be of two sorts; this must be further clarified.

Wherever *power* is given by Christ to his churches, and *duties* are required in the execution of that *power* for the ends of his spiritual kingdom, to be performed by virtue of this power, there is an *office* in the church. For an ecclesiastical office is a special power given by Christ to any person or persons for the performance of special duties belonging to the edification of the church in a special manner. And these offices have been of two sorts: first, *extraordinary*; secondly, *ordinary*.

Some seem to deny that there was ever any such thing as *extraordinary power* or *extraordinary offices* in the church. For they provide successors to all those who are pleaded to have been of that kind, exceeding them in

power and *rule*, however far short they may come of their predecessors in other things. I will not contend about words. I will therefore only inquire as to what it was that constituted those who were officers of Christ in his church, whom we thus call *extraordinary.* Then, if others can duly lay claim to them, they may be allowed to pass for their successors.

There are four things which constitute an extraordinary officer in the church of God, and consequently, they are required in and constitute an extraordinary office:

1. An extraordinary *call* to an office, such as no other has or can have, by virtue of any law, order, or constitution whatever.

2. An extraordinary *power* communicated to persons so called, enabling them to act what they are called to, and in which the essence of any office consists.

3. Extraordinary *gifts* for the exercise and discharge of that power.

4. Extraordinary *employment* as to its extent and measure, requiring extraordinary labor, travail, zeal, and self-denial.

All these do and must concur in that office and for those offices which we call extraordinary.

Thus it was with the apostles, prophets, and evangelists at the first, who were all extraordinary *teaching officers* in the church; and thus it was with all who ever were such, 1Cor 12.28; Eph 4.11. [1] Besides these at the first planting of the church, there were persons endowed with extraordinary gifts, such as miracles, healing, and tongues. These did not of themselves constitute them officers, but belonged to the second head of gifts, which concern *duties only*. However, these gifts were always most eminently bestowed on those who were called to the extraordinary offices mentioned: 1Cor 14.18, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all."

Some of them had the same gift, but the apostle had it in a more eminent degree. See Mat 10.8. [2] And we may briefly treat in our passage, these several sorts of extraordinary officers:

First. For the *apostles*, they had a double *call, mission*, and *commission*, or a twofold apostleship. Their first call was subservient to the personal ministry of Jesus Christ; for he was a "minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers," Rom 15.8. In the discharge of this personal ministry, it was necessary that he have particular servants and officers under him to prepare his way and work, and to attend him in this. So "he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them out to preach," Mark 3.14.

This was the substance of their first call and work — namely, to attend the presence of Christ, and to go out to preach as he ordered them. Hence, in his own person he was, as to his *prophetic* office, the "minister of the circumcision" according to all the promises; [3] and in this he was sent only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." Mat 15.24 Those who were thus to be assistants to him in his special work and ministry (and while they were so), he confined to those same persons and people, expressly prohibiting them from extending their line or measure any further. "Do not go," he says, "into the way of the Gentiles, nor enter into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Mat 10.5. This "rather" was absolutely exclusive of the others during his personal ministry. And afterward it included only the pre-eminence of the Israelites, so that they were to have the gospel offered to them in the first place: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you," Acts 13.46.

And this, it may be, occasioned that difference among them afterward, whether their ministry extended to the Gentiles or not, as we see in Acts 10

and 11. But after his resurrection, in that commission by which they were to act, our Savior extended their office and power expressly to "all nations," Mat 28.19, or to "every creature in all the world," Mark 16.15. And so a man might wonder why that uncertainty about Gentiles would arise. I am persuaded that God allowed it to be, so that the calling of the Gentiles would be more signalized, [4] or made more eminent by it. For this was the great "mystery which in other ages was not made known," but "hid in God," namely, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ" (that is, of the promise made to Abraham) "by the gospel," Eph 3.3, 5-11. It now being laid open and displayed, and by their hesitation about it, Christ would have it searched into, examined, tried, and proved, so that the faith of the church might never be shaken about it in later ages.

And similarly, when God at any time allows differences and doubts to arise in the church about the truth or about his worship, he does it for holy ends, even though for the present we may not be able to discover them. But this ministry of the apostles, with its powers and duties — this apostleship, which extended only to the church of the Jews — ceased at the death of Christ, or at the end of his own personal ministry in this world; nor can I suppose that any pretend to be their successor in this. Who or what specific instruments he will use and employ for the final recovery of that miserable, lost people — whether he will do it by an ordinary or an extraordinary ministry, by miraculous gifts, or by the naked efficacy of the gospel — is known only in his own holy wisdom and counsel.

The conjectures of men about these things are vain and fruitless. The promises under the Old Testament for *calling the Gentiles* were far clearer and more numerous than those which remain concerning the *recalling of the*

Jews. Yet because the manner, way, and all other circumstances, were obscured, the whole of it is called a *mystery hid in God* from all the former ages of the church. Much more, therefore, may the way and manner of the recalling of the Jews be considered a hidden mystery (as indeed it is), notwithstanding the dreams and conjectures of too many. [5]

But these same apostles — the same individual persons, only Judas excepted — had another call to that office of apostleship which had a respect to the whole work and interest of Christ in the world. They were now to be made *princes in all lands*, rulers, leaders in spiritual things of all the inhabitants of the earth, Psa 45.16. [6] And to make this call more conspicuous and evident, and also because it includes the institution and nature of the office to which they were called, our blessed Savior proceeds in it by various degrees; for —

1. He gave them a *promise of power* for their office, or office-power. So he promised them, in the person of Peter, the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," Mat 16.19; or a power of spiritual binding and loosing of sinners, of remitting or retaining sin, by the doctrine of the gospel, Mat 18.18; Joh 20.23.

2. He actually collated [7] on them a *right* to that power, expressed by an outward pledge: Joh 20.21-23, "Then Jesus said to them again, Peace to you: as my Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Ghost: if you remit the sins of any, they are remitted to them; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." And this communication of the Holy Ghost was such that it gave them a particular right and title to their office, but not a right and power to its exercise.

3. He *sealed the commission* which they had to discharge their office, as it were, containing the whole warranty they had to enter upon the world, and subdue it to the obedience of the gospel: Mat 28.18-20, "Go teach, baptize, command." Yet,

4. All these things did not absolutely give them a present power to exercise that office to which they were called — or at least a limitation was put on it for a season. For under all this provision and furnishing, they are commanded to stay at Jerusalem, and not address themselves to the discharge of their office, until that was fulfilled which would give it its completeness and perfection, Acts 1.4, 8.

Therefore, it is said that *after his ascension into heaven*, he "gave some to be apostles," Eph 4.8, 11. Until then, he did not give anyone *completely to be apostles*. He had previously appointed the *office*, designated the *persons*, and given them their *commission*, with the visible *pledge* of the power that they would afterward receive.

But there still remained the communication of *extraordinary* gifts to them, to enable them to discharge their office. And this was what they received *after the ascension* of Christ, on the day of Pentecost, as it is related in Acts 2. And this was so essentially necessary to their office, that the Lord Christ is said *in this* to give some to be apostles; for without these gifts they were not apostles, nor could they discharge that office to his honor and glory. And these things all concurred to the constitution of this office, with the call of any persons to the discharge of it. The *office* itself was instituted by Christ; the *designation* and call of the persons to this office was an immediate act of Christ; so also was their *commission* and power, and the *extraordinary gifts* which he endowed them with. And because the Lord Christ is said to give this office and these *officers* after his ascension —

namely, in the communication of the gifts of the Holy Ghost to those *officers* for the discharge of that office — it is evident that all office-power depends on the communication of gifts, whether extraordinary or ordinary. But where any of these is lacking, there is no apostle, nor any successor of even one apostle. Therefore, when Paul was afterward added to the twelve in the same power and office, he was careful to declare how he received both *call, commission*, and *power* immediately from Jesus Christ: "Paul an apostle, not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead," Gal 1.1. And so, those who pretend to be their successors, if they would speak the truth, must say that they are neither of Jesus Christ nor of God the Father, but of men and by man. However, they neither dare nor will pretend to be so called of God and Christ, as not to be called by the ministry of man — which would evacuate the pretense of succession in this office.

Secondly. to the *office* described, there furthermore belong the *measure* and extent of its power *objectively*, and the power itself intensively or *subjectively*.

For the *First*, the *object* of apostolic power was twofold:

1. The *world* that was to be converted;

2. The *churches* gathered of those who were converted, whether Jews or Gentiles.

1. For the first, their commission extended to all the world; and every apostle had the right, power, and authority to "preach the gospel to every creature under heaven," as he had opportunity to do so, Mat 28.18-20; Mark 16.15; Rom 10.14-18. Now, it was impossible for any one person to pass through the whole world in the pursuit of this right and power. And for that reason, our Lord had ordained twelve to that purpose, so that the work

might be more effectively carried on by their endeavors. And therefore, it is highly probable that, by agreement, they distributed the nations into certain lots and portions, which they singly took upon themselves to instruct.

So there was an agreement between Paul on the one hand with Barnabas — and Peter, James, and John, on the other — that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles, and the others take more special care of the Jews, Gal 2.7-9. [8] And the same apostle afterward designed, in order to avoid the *line or allotment* of others, to preach the gospel where the people were not allotted to the special charge of any other, 2Cor 10.16. [9] Yet this was not so appointed that their power was limited by it, or that any of them came short in his *apostolic* power in any other place in the world, as well as that in which, for convenience, he particularly exercised his ministry. For the power of every one of them still equally extended to all nations, even though they could not always exercise it in all places alike. Nor did that express agreement between Paul and Peter, about the Gentiles and the Circumcision, discharge them of their duty, so that the one would have more regard to the Gentiles, or the other to the Circumcision. Nor did it limit their power or bound their apostolic authority; it only directed the exercise of it as to its principal intention and design. Therefore, as to the *right* and authority of preaching the gospel and converting persons to the faith, the *whole world* fell equally under the care of every apostle, and it was in their commission — even though they applied themselves to the discharge of this work in particular, according to their own wisdom and choice, under the guidance and disposal of the providence of God.

I will not deny that it is the duty of every Christian, and much more of every minister of the gospel, to promote the knowledge of Christ to all mankind, as they have opportunities and advantages to do so. Yet I must say

that if there are any who pretend to be successors of the apostles, as to the extent of their office-power to all nations — notwithstanding whatever they may pretend about such an agreement to take a portion accommodated to their ease and interest, while so many nations of the earth lie unattempted as to the preaching of the gospel — they will one day be found transgressors of their own profession, and will be dealt with accordingly.

2. By the preaching of the gospel, persons were called out of the world, converted, and upon that, were gathered into holy societies or *churches*, for the celebration of gospel-worship and their own mutual edification. All these churches, wherever they were called and planted in the whole world, were equally under the authority of every apostle. Where any church was called and planted by any particular apostle, there was a special relation between him and them, and so a special mutual care and love; nor could it be otherwise. So the apostle Paul pleads a special interest in the Corinthians and others, to whom he had been a *spiritual father in* their conversion, and the instrument of forming Christ in them. [10]

It is probable, therefore, that each one took care, in special manner, of those churches which were of their own particular calling and planting. Yet no limitation of the apostolic power ensued from this. Every apostle still had the care of all the churches on him, and had apostolic authority in every church in the world equally, which he might exercise as occasion required. Thus Paul affirms that the "care of all the churches came upon him daily," 2Cor 11.28. And it was the crime of Diotrephes, for which he is branded, that he opposed the apostolic power of John in that church where probably he was the teacher, 3Joh 1.9-10. [11] What power over all churches, or what authority in all churches, some may now fancy or claim for themselves, I do

not know; but it could be wished that men would reckon this: that *care* and *labor* are as extensive in this case as *power* and *authority*.

Secondly. Again, the power of this extraordinary office may be considered subjectively as to what it was; that is, intensively or formally. And this, in one word, was *all the **power** that the Lord Christ has given or thought fit to make use of for the edification of the church*. I will give a brief description of it in a few general instances:

1. It was a power of administering all the ordinances of Christ in the way and manner of his appointment. Every apostle in all places had power to preach the word, to administer the sacraments, to ordain elders, and to do whatever else belonged to the worship of the gospel. But they did not yet have power to do any of these things in any other way than as the Lord Christ had appointed them to be done. They could not *baptize* anyone except believers and their seed, Acts 8.36-38, 16.15. They could not administer the Lord's supper to anyone except the church, and in the church, 1Cor 10.16-17, 11.17-34. They could not *ordain elders* except by the allowance and election of the people, Acts 14.23. Those indeed who pretend to be their successors, plead for such a right, in themselves, to some if not all gospel administrations. In this way they may take liberty to dispose of them at their pleasure, by their sole authority, without any regard to the rule of all holy duties in particular.

2. It was a power to execute all the laws of Christ, with the penalties annexed to their disobedience. "We have," says the apostle, "a readiness with which to revenge all disobedience," 2Cor 10.6. And this principally consisted in the power of *excommunication*, or the judiciary excision of any person or persons from the society of the faithful and visible body of Christ in the world. Now, although this power was absolutely in each apostle

towards all offenders in every church — which is why Paul affirms that he had personally "delivered Hymeneus and Alexander to Satan," 1Tim 1.20 —they did not exercise this power without the concurrence and consent of the church from which an offender was to be cut off. This is because that was the mind of Christ, and what the nature of the ordinance required, 1Cor 5.3-5. [12]

3. Their whole power was *spiritual*, and not *carnal*. It respected the souls, minds, and consciences of men alone as its object, not their bodies, goods, or liberties in this world. Those extraordinary instances of Ananias and Sapphira in their sudden death, or of Elymas in his blindness, [13] were only miraculous operations of God in testifying against their sin, and did not proceed from any *apostolic power* in the discharge of their office. But there now is a kind of power which has devoured all other displays of church authority— namely, the power to *fine, punish, imprison, banish, kill* and *destroy* men and women; these are Christians, *believers*, persons of an unblamable, useful conduct. And this is done with the worst of carnal weapons, and savage cruelty of mind. As the apostles were never entrusted with this sort of power, nor anything of the kind, they sufficiently manifested how their holy souls abhorred the thoughts of such antichristian power and practices — though in others, the mystery of iniquity began to work in their days. [14]

The ministry of the *seventy* was in like manner *temporary*. The Lord Christ sent them out "two by two before his face into every city and place where he himself would come," Luk 10.1-3; that is, it was subservient and commensurate to his own *personal ministry* in the flesh. These are commonly called *evangelists* from the general nature of their work; but they were not those extraordinary officers who came later in the Christian

church, under that title and appellation. But there was some analogy and proportion between the one and the other. For these first *seventy* seem to have had an inferior work, and subordinate to that of the *twelve* in their ministry to the church of the Jews during the time of the Lord Christ's converse among them. So too, those *evangelists* who were appointed afterward, were subordinate to the twelve in their *evangelical apostleship*. And as these seventy were immediately called to their employment by the Lord Jesus, and their *work* being *extraordinary*, they were also endowed with *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost, Luk 10.9, 17, 19. [15]

In the gospel church-state there were *evangelists* also, as mentioned in Eph 4.11; Acts 21.8; 2Tim 4.5 — gospellers, preachers of the gospel, distinct from the ordinary teachers of the churches. These things, I confess, are only obscurely delivered concerning this sort of men in Scripture, their office not being designed for continuance. Probably the institution of it was passed on from the temporary ministry of the *seventy*, mentioned before. It is uncertain and improbable that the same persons continued in their first office, as the apostles did (though it is not improbable that some of them might be called to this office) — just as Philip, Timothy, and Titus, were evangelists who were not of that first number.

Their special *call* is not mentioned, nor is their *number* anywhere intimated. That their *call was extraordinary*, is apparent from this: that no rules are given or prescribed anywhere about their choice or ordination; no qualification for their persons is expressed; nor is any direction given to the church as to its future proceeding about them — no more than there is about new or other apostles. They seem to have been *called by the apostles*, by the direction of a spirit of prophecy or by an immediate revelation from Christ. So it is said of Timothy, who is expressly called an evangelist, 2Tim 4.5,

that he received that gift "by prophecy," 1Tim 4.14; that is, he received the gift of the office — as when Christ ascended, he "gave gifts to men, some to be evangelists," Eph 4.8, 11. For in this way, the Holy Ghost designed men for extraordinary offices and employments, Acts 13.1-3. [16] And when they were so designed by prophecy, or immediate revelation from Christ by the Holy Ghost, then the church in compliance with this, both "prayed for them" and "laid their hands on them." So when the Holy Ghost had revealed his choosing of Paul and Barnabas for a special work, the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch (where they were then) "fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them," thus sending them away, Acts 13.3. And when Timothy was called to be an *evangelist* by special revelation or *prophecy*, the apostle *laid his hands* on him, by which he received the Holy Ghost in his extraordinary gifts: "The gift of God, which is in you by the laying on of my hands," 2Tim 1.6. And because it was usual for him to join others with himself in those epistles which he wrote by immediate divine inspiration, so in this act of *laying his hands* on an *evangelist*, as a sign of the communication of extraordinary gifts, he joined the ordinary presbytery of the church with him, those who were present in the place where he was called. It is evident, therefore, that both their *call* and their *gifts* were extraordinary, and therefore, so also was their *office*. For although men who have only an *ordinary* call to office may have *extraordinary gifts* (and many had these in primitive times); and although some might have *extraordinary gifts* who were never called to office at all — as with some of those who spoke with *tongues* and worked *miracles* — yet where there is a concurrence of an *extraordinary call* and *extraordinary gifts*, the office is extraordinary.

The *power* that these officers in the church were entrusted with was *extraordinary*; for this is a certain consequence of an extraordinary call and extraordinary gifts. And this power respected *all churches* in the world equally; and indeed, all *persons*, as the apostles also respected. But because their ministry was *subordinate* to that of the apostles, they were guided by them as to the particular places in which they were to exercise their power and discharge their office for a season.

This is evident from Paul's disposing of Titus as to his work and time, Tit 1.5, 3.12. [17] Yet their power at no time depended on their relation to any particular place or church; nor were they ever ordained to any one place or *see* [18] more than another. But the extent of their employment was in every way as large as that of the apostles, both as to the world and as to the churches. Only, in their present particular disposing of themselves, it is probable that they were under the guidance of the apostles for the most part — although for their special employment, they sometimes had particular revelations and directions from the Spirit, or by the ministry of angels, as Philip had, Acts 8.26. [19]

And as for their work, it may be reduced to three heads:

1. To *preach the gospel* in all places and to all persons, as they had occasion. So Philip went down to Samaria and "preached Christ," Acts 8.5. And when the apostle Paul charges Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist," 2Tim 4.5, he prescribes "preaching the word in season and out of season," verse 2. And because this was incumbent in like manner on the *ordinary teachers* of every church, the teaching of these *evangelists* differed from theirs in two things:

(1.) In the *extent* of their work, which as we showed before, was equal to that of the apostles; because *ordinary bishops*, pastors, or teachers, were to

feed, teach, and take care only of the special flocks which they were set over, Acts 20.17, 28; 1Pet 5.2. [20]

(2.) They were obliged to *labor in their work* in a more than ordinary manner, as it would seem from 2Tim 4.2, 5. [21]

2. The second part of their work was to confirm the doctrine of the gospel by *miraculous operations, as* occasion required. So Philip the evangelist worked many miracles of various sorts at Samaria, in confirmation of the doctrine which he taught, Acts 8.6, 7, 13. And, in like manner, there is no question that the rest of the evangelists had the power or gift of miraculous operations, to be exercised as occasion required, and as they were guided by the Holy Ghost.

3. They were employed in settling and completing those churches whose foundations were laid by the apostles. Because they had the great work upon them of "preaching the gospel to all nations," they could not continue long or reside in any one place or church. And yet when persons were newly converted to the faith, and disposed only into an imperfect order, without any special and particular officers, guides, or rulers of their own, it was not safe leaving them to themselves, lest they be too much at a loss as to gospel order and worship.

Therefore, in those places where any churches were planted but not completed, and the design of the apostles would not allow them to continue any longer there, they left these *evangelists* among them for a season, who had power by virtue of their office, to dispose of things in the churches until they came to completeness and perfection. When this end was attained, and the churches were settled under ordinary elders of their own, the evangelists moved to other places as they were directed or disposed. These things are

evident from the instructions given by Paul to Timothy and Titus, which all respect this order.

There are some who plead for the *continuance of this office* — some in express terms and under the same name; others plead for *successors* to them, at least in that part of their work which consists in power over many churches. Some say that *bishops* succeed to the apostles, and *presbyters* succeed to those evangelists; but this is scarcely defensible in any tolerable manner by them whose interest it is to defend it. For Timothy, whom they would claim to be a bishop, is expressly called an evangelist. What is pleaded with most probability for their continuance, is the *necessity of the work in which* they were employed, in the rule and settlement of the churches. But the truth is, if their whole work as described before is consulted, then just as none can perform some parts of it, so it may be that few would earnestly press to participate in their office. For to preach the word continually and do it with particular labor and travail, to move up and down [the world] as the necessity of the edification of the churches requires, doing nothing in those churches except according to the rule and appointment of Christ — these are things that not many will earnestly covet to be engaged in.

But there is an apprehension that there was something more than ordinary power belonging to this office — that those who enjoyed it were not always obliged to labor in any particular church, but they had the rule of many churches committed to them. Now, because this power is apt to draw other desirable things to it, or carry them along with it, this is what some pretend to succeed to. Though they are neither *called* like them, nor *gifted* like them, nor *labor* like them, nor have the same *object* of their employment, much less the same *power of extraordinary operations* as they did, yet as to

the rule over various churches, they must be their successors! I will therefore briefly do these two things:

1. Show that there are *no such officers as these evangelists* continued by the will of Christ in the ordinary state and course of the church;

2. Show that there is no need for their continuance from any work that is applied to them.

1. And thus, —

(1.) The things that are *essential* to the office of an *evangelist* are unattainable at present for the church; for where no command, no rule, no authority, no directions, are given for calling any officer, that office must cease, as does the office of the apostles, who could not be called except by Jesus Christ.

What is required for the *call* of an *evangelist* was declared before; and unless it can be manifested, either by institution or example, how anyone may *otherwise be called* to that office, no such office can be continued — for none will now pretend to a *call* by prophecy or immediate revelation, and the *evangelists* of old had no other call.

Nor is there the least mention in the Scripture of the call or appointment of anyone to be an *ecclesiastical officer* in an *ordinary stated church*,[22] except with relation to that church of which he was to be an officer. But an *evangelist*, as such, was not especially related to any one church more than another — though, as with the apostles themselves, they might for a time attend to the work in one place or church more than another. Therefore, without a call from the Holy Ghost, either immediately by *prophecy* and revelation, or by the direction of persons who are infallibly inspired, as the apostles were, none can be called to be evangelists, nor yet *succeed them* under any other name in that office. Therefore, the primitive church after

the apostles' time never once took it upon themselves to constitute or ordain *an evangelist*, knowing it was something beyond their rule and out of their power. Men may invade an office when they please; but unless they are called to it, they must account for their usurpation. As for those who have erected an office in the church, or an *episcopacy*, principally if not solely out of what is ascribed to these *evangelists* — namely, to Timothy and Titus — their claim may be attended to when they lay the least pretense to the whole of what is ascribed to those two. But "doing the work of an evangelist" is what few men care for or delight in. It is only their power and authority, in a new kind of managery, [23] that many would willingly possess.

(2.) The *evangelists* we read of had *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Spirit, without which they could not warrantably undertake their office. We have manifested this before. Now, these *extraordinary gifts* — differing not only in *degree* but in *kind* from all those of the *ordinary ministry* of the church — are not pretended to by any at present; and if any were to make such a pretense, it would be an easy matter to convince them of their folly. But without these gifts, men must content themselves with those offices in the church which are stated with respect to every particular congregation, Acts 14.23, 20.28; Tit 1.5; 1Pet 5.1-2; Phi 1.1. [24]

Some, indeed, do not seem satisfied to derive their claim from Timothy and Titus as *evangelists*, nor from the bishops that were *ordained* by them or *described* to them. But because those bishops were none other than *elders* of particular churches — as evident beyond a modest denial, from Acts 20.28; Phi 1.1; 1Tim 3.1, 2, 8; Tit 1.5-9 — so certainly they cannot be of both sorts, the one being apparently superior to the other. If they are such *bishops* as Titus and Timothy ordained, it is well enough known what their office, work, and duty is; and if they were such as these men pretend

Timothy and Titus were, then they must show it in the same call, gifts, and *employment*, as those two had. For —

(3.) There are not any now who pretend to their *principal employment* by virtue of office, nor can they do so. For it is certain that the principal work of the *evangelists* was to go up and down, from one place and nation to another, to *preach the gospel* to Jews and Gentiles who were as yet unconverted; and their commission for this purpose was as large and extensive as that of the apostles. But who will now empower anyone to this? What church, what persons, have received authority to *ordain* anyone to be such an *evangelist*? Or what rules or directions are given as to their *qualifications*, power, or duty, or how they should be ordained? It is true, those who are ordained ministers of the gospel, and also others who are the disciples of Christ, may and ought to preach the gospel to unconverted persons and nations as they have opportunity; and they are particularly guided by the providence of God. But it cannot be proved that any church or person has power or authority to ordain a person to this office and work.

2. Lastly. The *continuance of the employment of this office,* as to *settling newly planted churches,* is in no way necessary. For every church, being planted and settled, is entrusted with power for its own preservation and continuance in due order, according to the mind of Christ. And it is enabled to do all those things in itself, which at first were done under the guidance of the evangelists; nor can any one instance be given in which they are defective. And where any church was called and gathered in the name of Christ, which had some things still lacking for its perfection and complete order — which the *evangelists* were to finish and settle — they did it only in and by the power of the church itself, only presiding over and directing the things that were to be done. And if any churches, through their own

default, have lost that order and power which they were once established in, just as they will never lack power in themselves to recover their pristine estate and condition if they attend to their duty to rule according to that purpose, so this would prove a necessity to raise up *new evangelists*, of a new extraordinary ministry, on the defection of churches, rather than prove a necessity for their continuance in a church that is rightly stated and settled.

Besides these *evangelists* there were also *prophets*, who had a *temporary, extraordinary ministry* in the church. Their grant from Christ, or their institution in the church, is mentioned in 1Cor 12.28, and Eph 4.11; and the exercise of their ministry is declared in Acts 13.1-2.[25] But the terms *prophets* and *prophecy* are used variously in the New Testament: —

1. Sometimes an *extraordinary office* and *extraordinary gifts* are signified by them;

2. Sometimes *extraordinary gifts* only;

3. Sometimes an *ordinary* office with *ordinary gifts*, and sometimes *ordinary gifts* only.

And the use of the word may be reduced everywhere to one of these heads:

1. In the places mentioned, *extraordinary officers* endowed with *extraordinary gifts* are intended; for they are said to be "set in the church," and are placed in the second rank of officers, next to the apostles, "first apostles, secondarily prophets," 1Cor 12.28, and between apostles and evangelists, in Eph 4.11. Two things are ascribed to them:

(1.) They *received immediate revelations* and directions from the Holy Ghost in things that belonged to the present duty of the church. It was to

them that the Holy Ghost revealed his mind, and gave commands concerning the separation of Barnabas and Saul to their work, Acts 13.2.

(2.) They foretold things to come, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in which the duty or edification of the church was concerned. So Agabus the prophet foretold the famine in the days of Claudius Cæsar. Upon this prophecy, provision was made for "the poor saints at Jerusalem," so that they might not suffer by it, Acts 11.28-30. And the same person afterward prophesied of the bonds and sufferings of Paul at Jerusalem, Acts 21.10-11. And it being of the highest concern to the church, it seems the same thing was revealed to the prophets in most churches. For so Paul himself gives an account of it: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will befall me there, save what the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me," Acts 20.22-23 — that is, in all the cities he passed through where there were churches planted and prophets in them. The churches then stood in need of these things for their confirmation, direction, and comfort. And therefore, I suppose, most of them were supplied with such officers for a season — that is, while they were needful. And though prophets were expressly affirmed to be "set in the church," and placed between the apostles and the evangelists, no one that I know of, pretends a succession to this office. All grant that prophets were extraordinary, because their gift and work were extraordinary; so too were those of *evangelists*. But there is no mention of the *power and rule* of those prophets, or else undoubtedly we would have had successors provided for them, on one pretense or other!

2. Sometimes this expression intends an *extraordinary gift*, without an office. So it is said that Philip the evangelist "had four daughters, virgins, who prophesied," Acts 21.9. It is not said that they were *prophetesses*, as

there were some under the Old Testament; [26] only that "they prophesied;" that is, they occasionally had revelations from the Holy Ghost for the use of the church. For to *prophesy is* nothing but to declare hidden and secret things by virtue of immediate revelation, of whatever nature they may be; and so the word is commonly used in Mat 26.68; Luk 22.64. [27] So an *extraordinary gift* without an office is expressed in Acts 19.6: "When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied." Their prophesying, which was their declaration of spiritual things by immediate revelation, was of the same nature as *speaking with tongues*; both were extraordinary gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost. *Miracles, healings*, and *tongues* were of this sort, which God set for a time in the church. They did not constitute distinct officers in the church, but they were only various persons in each church who were endowed with these extraordinary gifts for its edification. And therefore they are placed after *teachers*, comprising both, which were the principal sort of the ordinary, continuing officers of the church, 1Cor 12.28. [28] I consider those prophets mentioned in 1Cor 14.29-33, [29] to be of this sort. For it is evident from the context, that they were neither stated officers in the churches, nor the brethren of the church promiscuously, [30] but those who had received a special *extraordinary gift*. See verses 30, 31.

3. Again, an *ordinary office* with *ordinary gifts* is intended by this expression: Rom 12.6, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us; if prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." Prophecy here can intend nothing but *teaching* or preaching in the exposition and application of the word. For an *external rule* is given to it: it must be done according to the "proportion of faith," or the sound doctrine of faith revealed in the Scripture. This ever was, and will ever continue to be,

the work and duty of the ordinary teachers of the church. They are enabled for this by the gifts of Christ, which they receive by the Holy Ghost, Eph 4.7; [31] we will see more of this afterward. And hence also, those who are not called to office, but who have received a gift enabling them to declare the mind of God in the Scripture, for the edification of others, may be said to "prophesy."

I thought it fitting to interpose these things, with a brief description of those *officers* which the Lord Jesus Christ granted to his church *for a season* (at its first planting and establishment), with what belonged to their office, and the necessity of their work. For the bestowal of these gifts on the church, and their whole furnishing with spiritual gifts, was the immediate work of the Holy Ghost, which is what we are declaring.

And with this, it was my design to manifest how vain the pretense is of some, to a kind of *succession* to these officers, by those who have neither an extraordinary call, nor extraordinary gifts, nor extraordinary employment, but are only pleased to assume an *extraordinary power* for themselves over the churches and disciples of Christ. It is such a power that neither evangelists, nor prophets, nor apostles, ever claimed or made use of. But this *matter of power* is fuel in itself for the proud, ambitious minds of *Diotrephists.* [32] As it is now circumstanced, with other advantages, it is useful to the corrupt lusts of men. And therefore, it is no wonder that power is pretended to and greedily reached after, by those who really have neither a call to the ministry, nor gifts for it, nor who employ themselves in it. The original glory and honor of the churches, in a special manner, consisted in these extraordinary officers and their gifts; it was by them, that the edification of the churches was carried on and perfected. And therefore, by

an *empty pretense* to their *power*, without their order and spirit, the churches have been stained, and deformed, and brought to destruction.

But we must return to the consideration of extraordinary spiritual gifts, which is the special work before us.

1. **1Cor 12:28** And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. **Eph 4:11** And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers;
2. **Mat 10:8** "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.
3. **Rom 15:8** Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the fathers;
4. *Signal*: notably out of the ordinary.
5. Owen may be referring to eschatology and the restoration of Israel prior to Christ's return, called Chiliasm, the Golden Age, or the Jewish Dream. The second Helvetic Confession (1566) states, "We further condemn Jewish dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment, and that the pious, having subdued all their godless enemies, will possess all the kingdoms of the earth." The "recalling of the Jews," alludes to Rom 11:25, "that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." This is the mytery conjectured about. Owen has been very clear and consistent in his writings, that there are not two Israels ordained to salvation, but one – *the Church* (Rom 9.6; Gal 3.16). – WHG
6. **Psa 45:16** Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, Whom You shall make princes in all the earth.
7. *Collate*: to confer or bestow.

8. **Gal 2:7** But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter [8] (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), [9] and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.
9. **2Cor 10:16** to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.
10. **Gal 4:19** My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you;
11. **3Joh 1:9** I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. [10] Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.
12. **1Cor 3:3** for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? [4] For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal? [5] Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?
13. Acts 5.1ff; 13.6ff.
14. **2Thes 2:7** For the mystery of lawlessness [or "of the wicked one"] is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.
15. **Luk 10:9** "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' **Luk 10:17** Then the seventy returned with joy,

saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name…" [19] "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

16. **Act 13:1** Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.

17. **Tit 1:5** For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you; **Tit 3:12** When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

18. *See*: the seat within a bishop's diocese (his territorial jurisdiction) where his cathedral is located.

19. **Act 8:26** Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. **Act 8:29** Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

20. **Act 20:17** From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. **Act 20:28** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **1Pet 5:2** Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

21. NKJ **2 Timothy 4:2** Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching… 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
22. A stated church is a particular church that is settled or established, as opposed to one being planted.
23. Managery: a barb referring to a concocted managerial position.
24. **Act 14:23** So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. **Act 20:28** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **Tit 1:5** For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you; **1Pet 5:1** The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; **Phi 1:1** Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
25. **Act 13:1** Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

26. Miriam (Exo 15.20), Deborah (Jdg 4.4), Huldah (2Kng 22.14), Noadiah (Neh 6.14), Isaiah's wife (Isa 8.3).
27. "Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?"
28. **1Cor 12:28** And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.
29. **1Cor 14:29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. [30] But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. [31] For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. [32] And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. [33] For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
30. *Promiscuously*: mixed or thrown together in a random and haphazard fashion.
31. **Eph 4:7** But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.
32. Those who love to have the *preeminence* – status, superiority, and power (3Joh 1.9).

Chapter IV. Extraordinary spiritual gifts, 1Cor 12.4-11.

Thirdly. Extraordinary *spiritual gifts* were of two sorts:

First. Those which absolutely exceed the whole power and faculties of our minds and souls. These, therefore, did not consist in an *abiding principle* or faculty always resident in those who received them, such that they could exercise them by virtue of any inherent power and ability in themselves. They were granted to some persons, in the execution of their office, so that, as often as needed, they could produce their effects by virtue of an immediate *extraordinary* influence of divine power, transiently affecting their minds. Such was the *gift* of *miracles, healing*, and the like. There were no extraordinary officers, but they had these extraordinary gifts. Yet they could work or operate by virtue of these gifts, only as the Holy Ghost gave them *special direction* for putting forth his power in them. So it is said of Paul and Barnabas preaching at Iconium, "the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands," Acts 14.3. The working of signs and miracles is the

immediate operation of the Spirit of God; nor can any power or faculty that efficiently produces such effects, abide in the souls or minds of men.

These *miraculous operations* were the *witness of the Holy Ghost*, sent down from heaven, which he gave to the truth of the gospel. See Heb 2.4, [1] with our exposition on that. [2] Therefore, there was no more in these gifts, which *absolutely exceed the whole faculties* of our natures, than the designing of certain persons by the Holy Ghost, in and with whose ministry He would *himself* effect miraculous operations.

Secondly. They consisted in *extraordinary endowments* and improvements of the faculties of the souls or minds of men: such as *wisdom, knowledge, utterance*, and the like. Now, where these were bestowed on anyone in an *extraordinary manner*, as they were on the apostles and evangelists, they differed only in *degree* from those which are ordinary and still continued, but are of the *same kind* as them; we will address this afterward. Now, because all these gifts of both sorts are expressly and distinctly enumerated and set down by our apostle in one place, I will consider them as they are proposed there by him:

1Cor 12.7-11, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the self-same Spirit works all these, distributing to every man severally as he will."

The general concerns of the apostle in this passage were declared, and the context explained, at the beginning of our discourse on this subject. I will

only consider now the special spiritual gifts that are enumerated here by the apostle, which are *nine* in number, laid down promiscuously without respect to any order, or dependence of one upon another; although it is probable that those *placed first* were the principal ones, or of principal use in the church.

The first is *Logos sophias* [3] — The "*word of wisdom*." *Logos* here has the same meaning as *dabar* in the Hebrew, [4] which often signifies a *thing* or matter; therefore, the "word of wisdom" is nothing but *wisdom itself*. And our inquiry is, What was that *wisdom* which was a particular and special gift of the Holy Ghost in those days? Our Lord Jesus Christ promised his disciples that he would give them "a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries would not be able to refute or resist," Luk 21.15. This will be our rule in the declaration of the nature of this gift. What he respects is the *defense of the gospel* and its truth against powerful persecuting adversaries. For although they had the truth on their side, yet being ignorant and unlearned men, they might justly fear that when they were brought before *kings*, and *rulers*, and *priests*, they would be baffled in their profession, and not be able to defend the truth.

Therefore, this promise of a "mouth and wisdom" respects spiritual ability and utterance in the defense of the truth of the gospel, when they were called into question about it. Spiritual ability of mind is the wisdom, and utterance or freedom of speech is the *mouth*, promised here. We have an eminent instance of accomplishing this with Peter and John, Acts 4. For upon making a *defense* of the resurrection of Christ, and the truth of the gospel in this, their *adversaries* were not able to refute or resist it. It is said that when the *rulers and elders saw their parrhesian*, [5] that is, their bold *utterance* in defense of their cause, and the wisdom with which it was

accompanied — considering that they were "unlearned and ignorant" — they were astonished, and only considered "that they had been with Jesus," Act 4.13. It was Jesus, in the accomplishment of his promise, that had given these men that spiritual wisdom and utterance which the rulers and elders were not *able to resist*. So it is said expressly of Stephen that his adversaries "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke," Acts 6.10.

Therefore, this gift of wisdom, in the first place, was a *spiritual skill and ability* to defend the truths of the gospel when questioned, opposed, or blasphemed. And this *gift* was eminent in those primitive times, when a company of unlearned men was able on all occasions to *maintain* and defend the truth which they believed and professed. They did so before and against doctors, scribes, lawyers, rulers of synagogues, indeed, against princes and kings, continually confounding their adversaries. Being obstinate in their unbelief, those adversaries were forced to cover their *shame* by resorting to *rage* and bestial fury, Acts 6.10-14, 7.54, 22.22-23. [6] This has been the manner of all their successors ever since.

Now, this is a special *kind of wisdom, an* eminent gift of the Holy Ghost in which the glory of Christ and the honor of the gospel are greatly concerned. It is an ability to manage and defend the truth in times of trial and danger, to the confusion of its adversaries. I suppose the wisdom intended here is not absolutely confined to this, though it is principally intended. Peter, speaking of Paul's epistles, affirms that they were written "according to the wisdom given to him," 2Pet 3.15; that is, according to that *special gift* of spiritual wisdom which he had received for managing gospel truths for the edification of the church of Christ. And if someone would

understand what this *wisdom* is, he must be thoroughly conversant in the writings of that apostle.

For, indeed, the *wisdom* Paul uses in managing the doctrine of the gospel is inexpressibly glorious and excellent — in the due consideration of all persons, occasions, circumstances, temptations of men and churches; of their state, condition, strength or weakness, growth or decays, obedience or failings, their capacities and progress; with the holy accommodation of himself in what he teaches or delivers, doing it in meekness, in vehemence, in tenderness, in sharpness, in severe arguings and *pathetic* expostulations, with all other ways and means that are suited to his holy ends in the propagation of the gospel and the edification of the church. He did all this according to the *singular gift of wisdom* that was bestowed on him.

Therefore, I take the "word of wisdom" mentioned here, to be a special spiritual skill and ability to *wisely* manage the gospel in its administration for the advantage and furtherance of the truth — especially in the defense of that truth when called to trial with its adversaries. This was an *eminent gift* of the Holy Ghost. And considering the persons employed by him in the ministry, who for the most part were known to be unlearned and ignorant, this filled the world with amazement, and it was an effectual means for subduing multitudes to the obedience of faith. So eminent was the apostle Paul in this gift, and so successful in managing it, that his adversaries had nothing to say except that he was subtle, and took men by craft and guile, 2Cor 12.16. [7] The use he made of sweetness, condescension, self-denial, holy compliance with all — mixed with truth, gravity, and authority — they would have be nothing but craft and guile. And this *gift*, when it is continued in any measure for any *minister of the gospel*, is of singular use to the church of God. Indeed, I have no doubt that the apostle fixed it here

in the *first place*, as that which was eminent above all the rest. And where wisdom is *lacking too much*, we see what woeful mistakes and mists that men who are otherwise good and holy, will run themselves into, to the great disadvantage of the gospel. The real enjoyment and exercise of wisdom in any competent measure, is the life and grace of the ministry. God filled Bezalel and Aholiab with *wisdom* for building the tabernacle of old. So too, unless he gives this spiritual *wisdom* to the ministers of the gospel, no *tabernacle* of His will be erected where it has fallen down, nor kept up where it stands. I do not mean *secular wisdom* or *civil wisdom*, much less *carnal wisdom* — but a *spiritual ability* to discharge all our duties rightly in the ministry committed to us. And as said, where this wisdom is lacking, we will quickly see woeful and shameful work made in churches themselves.

I cannot pass by the consideration of this *gift* without offering something that may guide us either in obtaining it, or duly exercising it. The ensuing things may be subservient to this; such as —

1. A sense of our own *insufficiency, of ourselves*, as to any end for which this *wisdom* is requisite. As it is declared that we have *no sufficiency* in ourselves for anything that is good,[Rom 7.18] *all our sufficiency* is of God. And so, it is particularly denied that we have any sufficiency for the work of the ministry, in that *interrogatory* containing a negative proposition, "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2Cor 2.16. A sense of this is the first step towards this wisdom, as our apostle expressly declares: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," 1Cor 3.18. Until we discover and are sensible of our own *folly*, we are fit neither to receive nor to use this spiritual wisdom. And the lack of this proves the ruin of many who pretend to the ministry; it could be wished that it was only to their own ruin. They

come to the work of the ministry full of *pride, self-conceit*, and foolish elation of mind, in an apprehension of their own abilities; yet for the most part, these are mean and contemptible. This keeps them sufficiently estranged from a sense of that *spiritual wisdom* which we are addressing. Hence, there is nothing of a *gospel ministry* found among them, nor its work, but only an empty name. And as for those who have reduced all ecclesiastical administrations to *canons*, *laws, acts, courts*, and *legal processes*, they seem to do it with a design to cast off all use of spiritual gifts — indeed, to exclude from the church of God, both them and their Author, both name and thing. Is this the wisdom given by the Holy Ghost for the due management of gospel administrations? Is it that men should get a little skill in some of the worst of human laws, and the unattractive artifices of intrigue in *secular courts* — things that these men pride themselves in, terrifying poor creatures with mulcts [8] and penalties that they are in any way liable to? Of what use these things may be in the world I do not know; but they do not belong in the church of God.

2. Being sensible of our own insufficiency, *earnest prayers* for a supply of this *wisdom* are required in us: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and does not upbraid; and it will be given to him," Jas 1.5. There is both a precept and a promise to enforce this duty. That we all lack wisdom in ourselves is unquestionable — I mean, as to our concern in the gospel, either to hear testimony to it in difficulties, or to manage its truths for edification. The way for our supply lies plain and open before us; nor is there any other in which we can take one step towards it: "Let us ask it of God, who gives liberally," and we will receive it. This was what rendered Solomon so great and glorious — when he had his choice given to him of all desirable things, he made his request for

wisdom to discharge that office and its duties, to which God had called him. Though he was to rule a *whole kingdom*, his work was carnal and worldly, compared with the spiritual administrations of the gospel.

And a "worldly ministry" is no less averse to this, than to a sense of one's own insufficiency. The fruits sufficiently manifest how much this duty is contemned [9] by worldly ministers. But the neglect of it — I say, the neglect of *praying for wisdom* to be enabled to discharge the work of the ministry, and to duly manage the truths of the gospel as occasions require — in those who pretend to this ministry, is a fruit of unbelief; indeed, it is a fruit of atheism and contempt of God.

3. *Due meditation* on our great *pattern*, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles is also required for this — being followers of them as they were followers of him.[1Cor 11.1] As in all other things, the Lord Jesus was the great pattern and example, especially in his ministry of revealing the truth, and giving testimony to it. In him, God represents to us that *perfection in wisdom* which we ought to aim at. I will not in particular look into this heavenly treasury here. I will only say that the one who would be *really and truly wise in spiritual things*, who would either rightly receive or duly improve this gift of the Holy Ghost, ought to continually bear in his heart, mind, and affections, this great exemplar and *idea* of it, specifically, the Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry. Namely, bear in mind what he did, what he spoke, how on all occasions his condescension, meekness, and authority manifested themselves, until that man is changed into the same image and likeness, by the Spirit of the Lord. The same is to be done, in their place and sphere, towards the *apostles*, as the principal followers of Christ — those who most lively represent his graces and wisdom to us. Their writings, and what is written about them, are to be searched and studied to this very end:

that considering how they behaved themselves in all instances, on all occasions, in their testimony, and in all administrations of the truth, we may endeavor to conform to them, partaking of the same Spirit with them. It would be no small support and guidance for us, if on all occasions we would diligently search and consider what the *apostles* did in such circumstances, or what they would have done, corresponding to what is recorded about their spirit and actings. For although this *wisdom* is a gift of the Holy Spirit, as we now consider it and as it is continued in the church, it may in part be obtained and greatly improved in a due use of the means which are subservient to this — provided that in all of this, we depend solely on God for giving it, who has also prescribed these means for the same end.

4. Let those who design to participate in this *gift*, take heed it is not *stifled with those vicious habits of mind* which are expressly contrary to it and destructive of it, such as self-fullness or confidence, hastiness of spirit, promptness to speak and slowness to hear. These are the great means by which many abound in their own sense and folly — they are wise in their own conceits, and contemptible in their judgment of all who are truly wise. *Ability of speech*, in its time and season, is a special gift of God, and eminently so with respect to the spiritual things of the gospel. But *fluent speech*, venting itself on all occasions and on no occasions, making men open their mouths wide when indeed they should shut them and open their ears, pouring out all that they know and do not know, making them angry if not heard, and impatient if they are contradicted, is an unconquerable fortification against all true spiritual wisdom.

5. Let those who would share in this, pursue those *gifts* and *graces* which *accompany it*, promote it, and are inseparable from it: such as *humility,*

meekness, patience, constancy, with boldness and confidence in profession. Without these, we will be fools in every trial. *Wisdom*, indeed, is none of these; but it is that which cannot be without them, nor will it thrive in any mind that is not cultivated by them. The one who thinks it is not worth his pains and travail — nor that it will pay [10] to seek this spiritual wisdom by constant watchfulness against the opposite vices mentioned, and attending to those concomitant duties and graces — must be content to go without it.

This is the first instance given by our apostle of the spiritual gifts of the primitive times: "To one is given by the Spirit *the word of wisdom*."

"To another the *word of knowledge* by the same Spirit," — *logos gnosis*. [11] I showed before that *logos* may denote the *thing* itself; the "word of knowledge" is *knowledge*. But if any suppose that because this *knowledge* was to be expressed to the church for its edification, it is therefore called a "*word of knowledge*," like a "word of exhortation," or a "word of consolation," — that is, exhortation or consolation administered by words — I will not contend to the contrary. *Knowledge* is the gift particularly intended in this second place. And we must inquire both how it is a special gift, and *what sort it is*. It would seem that it cannot have the nature of a special *gift*, seeing that it was common to all. For so says the apostle speaking to the whole church at Corinth, "We know that we *all* have knowledge," 1Cor 8.1. Not only this, but he also adds that this *knowledge* is a thing which either in its own nature tends to an ill issue, or it is very apt to be abused to that end. For he says, "Knowledge puffs up," for which reason he frequently reflects on it in ether places.

Yet we will find that it is a *special gift*; and in itself it is singularly useful, however it may be abused — as the best things may be, and indeed, are most liable to be. The *knowledge* mentioned in that verse by the apostle,

which he ascribes in common to the whole church, was only that which concerned "things sacrificed to idols." And so, if we would extend it further — to an understanding of the "mystery of the gospel" which was in the community of believers — there is still room remaining for *eminence* in this, by virtue of a special spiritual gift. And as to what he adds about "knowledge puffing up," he expounds on it in the next words: "If any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know," 1Cor 8.2. It is not men's knowledge itself, but the vain and proud conceit of ignorant men, supposing they are *knowing and wise*, that so puffs up and hinders edification.

Therefore —

1. This "word of knowledge" does not intend *that degree of knowledge* which is required in all Christians, in all the members of the church. There is such a measure of knowledge necessary both to faith and confession. Men can believe nothing of what they know nothing about; nor can they confess with their mouths what they do not apprehend in their minds. But this knowledge is somewhat *singular, eminent*, and *not common* to all.

2. Nor does that *eminency* or singularity consist in *saving* and sanctifying knowledge. There is a particular knowledge by which "God shines in the heart of believers" with a spiritual, saving insight into spiritual things, transforming the mind into the likeness of them; I declared that at large elsewhere. But this singular knowledge is reckoned among *gifts*, while that other knowledge is a *saving grace* — the difference between them was declared before. It is expressed by the apostle in 1Cor 13.2, as "understanding all mysteries and all knowledge;" that is, having an understanding in, and knowledge of, all mysteries. He calls this knowledge a *gift* which "will vanish away," verse 8. And so it does not belong

absolutely to that grace which, being a part of the image of God in us, will go over into eternity. And "knowledge" in 1Cor 8.2, is taken for the thing known: "Though I understand all knowledge" — this is the same as "all mysteries." Therefore, the knowledge intended here is such a particular and special insight into the mysteries of the gospel, that those who had it, were enabled to teach and instruct others by it. Thus the apostle Paul, who had received all these gifts in the highest degree and measure, affirms that, by his writing, those to whom he wrote might perceive his "skill and understanding in the mystery of Christ." Eph 3.4

And in a special manner, this was necessary for those *first dispensers of the gospel*; for how else would the church have been instructed in the knowledge of it? They prayed this for them — namely, that they might be filled with the *knowledge* of the will of God "in all wisdom and understanding," Col 1.9; Eph 1.15-20, 3.14-19; Col 2.1-2.

The means by which they might come to this knowledge was by their instruction. Therefore, they were to be skilled [12] in a particular manner in the knowledge of those mysteries which they were to impart to others, and do it accordingly: so it was with them, Acts 20.27; Eph 3.8-9; Col 4.2-4. [13] Now, even if this gift is withheld as to that excellent degree found in the apostles, and those who received the knowledge of Christ and the gospel by *immediate revelation*, it is still communicated to the ministers of the church, in that measure necessary for its edification. If anyone undertakes an office in the church, who has not received this gift in some good measure, of the knowledge of the mystery of God and the gospel, he imposes himself on that service in the house of God, which he is neither called to nor fitted for. Having lived to see any endeavors for a special acquaintance with the

mysteries of the gospel despised or derided by some, it is an evidence of that fatal and fearful apostasy into which most Christians have fallen.

Thirdly. Faith is added in the third place: "To another *faith* by the same Spirit." The context makes it manifest that the saving grace of faith, which is common to all true believers, is not intended here. There is a *faith* in Scripture which is commonly called the "faith of miracles," mentioned by our apostle in this epistle as a principal, extraordinary, spiritual gift: 1Cor 13.2, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains," — that is, the highest degree of miraculous faith, or faith that would effect miraculous operations of the highest nature. I would readily admit that this is intended here, except that there is mention made of *working miracles* in the next verse, as a gift distinct from this faith. Yet, because *working miracles* is ascribed everywhere to *faith*, and could not be found anywhere except where the particular faith from which those operations proceeded was first imparted, it is not unlikely that what may be intended by "faith" is the *principle* of all miraculous operations, and the other expressions intend the *operations* themselves. But if the distinction of these gifts is to be preserved (as I rather judge it ought to be), considering the placing of "faith" immediately upon "wisdom" and "knowledge," I would judge that a special confidence, boldness, and assurance of mind in the profession of the gospel and the administration of its ordinances is intended here. "Faith" is therefore that *freedom*, confidence, and "boldness in the faith," [14] or profession of the faith, "which is in Christ Jesus," mentioned by the apostle, 1Tim 3.13 — that is, our *hupostasis* [15] or "confidence" in profession, whose "beginning we are to hold steadfast to the end," Heb 3.14. And we see how *excellent a gift* this is on all occasions.

When troubles and trials befall the church on account of its profession, many (even true believers) are ready to faint and despond, and some are ready to draw back, at least for a season, as others utterly do, to the perdition of their souls. In this state, the eminent usefulness of this *gift of boldness in the faith* — of an assured confidence in profession, of a special faith to go through troubles and trials — is known to all. Often its eminence in one single person has been the means to preserve a whole church from coldness, backsliding, or sinful compliances with the world. And where God stirs up anyone to some great or singular work in his church, he constantly endows them with this *gift of faith*. So was it with Luther, whose undaunted courage and resolution in profession, or boldness in the faith, was one of the principal means of succeeding in his great undertaking. And there is no more certain sign of churches being forsaken by Christ in a time of trial, than if this gift is withheld from them, and pusillanimity, [16] fearfulness, and carnal wisdom, spring up in its place. The work and effects of this faith are expressed in 1Cor 16.13: "Watch, stand fast in the faith, acquit yourselves like men, be strong." So also Eph 6.10; 2Tim 2.1. And the special way by which it may be attained or improved, is *by a diligent, careful discharge at all times, of all the duties of the positions we hold in the church*, 1Pet 5.1-4. [17]

Fourthly. The gifts of healing are mentioned next: "To another the *gifts of healing* by the same Spirit." [18] They are again expressed in 1Cor 12.28, in the *plural number*, because of their free communication to *many* persons. These *healings* respected those who were sick, in their sudden and miraculous recovery from long or deadly distempers, by laying on hands in the name of the Lord Jesus. And because many of the "mighty works" of Christ himself, for the reasons that will be mentioned, consisted in these

"healings," it was one of the first things to which he commissioned his apostles. He furnished them with power for it, while they attended him in his personal ministry, Mat 10.1. He also did this with the *seventy*, making it the principal sign of the approach of the kingdom of God, Luk 10.9. And he promised the same power and virtue to believers after his ascension — namely, that they would "lay hands on the sick and recover them." Mk 16.18 The story of the Acts of the Apostles gives us many instances of the accomplishment of this promise, and the exercise of this power, Act 3.7, 5.15, 9.33-34. Two things are observed that are singular in the exercise of this gift: first, that many were cured by the shadow of Peter as he passed by, Act 5.15; and again, many were cured by handkerchiefs or aprons carried from the body of Paul, Act 19.12.

And the reason for these extraordinary operations in extraordinary cases seems to have been the encouragement of that great faith which was then stirred up in those who beheld those miraculous operations. This was of singular advantage to the propagation of the gospel, just as the magical superstition of the Roman church — endeavoring in various ways to imitate these inimitable actings of sovereign divine power — has been a dishonor to Christian religion.

But because these "healings" were *miraculous operations*, it may be inquired why the *gift of them* is constantly distinguished from "*miracles*," and placed as a distinct effect of the Holy Ghost by itself. For it is evident that it is so, both in the commission of Christ granting this power to his disciples, and in the annumeration [19] of these gifts in this and other places.

I answer, this seems to be done on a threefold account:

1. Because *miracles* absolutely were a sign to those who did *not believe*, as the apostle says about "tongues": they were "a sign, not to those who

believed, but to those who did not believe," 1Cor 14.22 — that is, they served for their conviction. But this work of *healing was a sign to believers*, and that was on a double account; for —

(1.) The pouring out of this gift of the Holy Ghost was a special sign and token of the *coming of the kingdom of God*. So our Savior says to his disciples, "Heal the sick, and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near you," Luk 10.9; this gift of healing was a token and pledge of this. Our Savior gave a sign of this himself when John sent his disciples to him to inquire (for their own satisfaction, not his) whether he was the Messiah or not: Mat 11.4-5, "Go," he says," and show John again those things which you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." This was the evidence of his being the Messiah, and bringing in the kingdom of God. The Jews have an ancient tradition, that in the days of the Messiah *all things will be healed except the serpent*. And there is a truth in what they say, although for their part they do not understand it; for *all are healed by Christ, except the serpent and his seed* — the wicked, unbelieving world. And this gift was a sign of it to the church — namely, of the healing and recovery of all things by Christ. Therefore, he began his ministry after his first miracle, with "healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people," Mat 4.23-25.

(2.) It was a sign that Christ *had borne and taken away sin*, which was the cause, root, and spring of diseases and sicknesses; without this, no one could have been miraculously cured. Hence we have Isa 53.4, "Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;" which is afterward

interpreted as being "wounded for our transgressions," and "bruised for our iniquities," verse 5.

It is also interpreted by Peter, as his "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," 1Pet 2.24. It is applied by Matthew to curing diseases and sicknesses, Mat 8.16-17. [20] Now, this was for no other reason than because *healing diseases* was a sign and effect of Christ's *bearing our sins*, the causes of them. Without a supposition of this, *healing* would have been *a false witness* to men. On these accounts, therefore, it was a *sign to believers also*.

2. Because it had in it a particular *goodness, relief*, and *benignity* towards mankind, which other miraculous operations did not, at least not to the same degree. Indeed, this was one great difference between the *miraculous operations* that were worked under the Old Testament, and those under the New: the former generally consisted in dreadful and tremendous works, bringing astonishment and often ruin to mankind; but those others were generally *useful and beneficial* to all. This miracle of *healing* had a special evidence of *love, kindness*, compassion, and benignity; and it was suited to greatly affect the minds of men with regard and gratitude. For long *afflictive distempers* or *violent pains*, such as the diseases cured by this gift, prepare the minds of men, and those concerned in them, to greatly value their deliverance. Therefore, in a special manner, this declared and evidenced the goodness, love, and compassion of Him that was the author of this gospel, and who gave this sign of healing *spiritual* diseases by healing *bodily* distempers. Doubtless, many who were made partakers of the benefit of this, were greatly affected by it — and this was not only as to "walking, and leaping, and praising God," as the cripple did who was cured by Peter and John, Acts 3.8; but also as to faith and boldness in profession, as with the

blind man healed by our Savior himself, Joh 9.30-33, 38, etc. Yet, of themselves, no outward effects can work on the hearts of men so that all who are made partakers of them will be brought to *faith, thankfulness*, and *obedience*. Hence, our Savior observed that, of the ten who were at once cleansed from their leprosy by him, only one returned to give glory to God, Luk 17.17. And the one whom he cured of a *disease* that he had suffered under for thirty-eight years, notwithstanding a solemn admonition given by our blessed Savior, turned *informer* against him, and endeavored to betray him to the Jews, Joh 5.5-16. It is effectual grace alone which can change the heart. Without this, it will continue to be obstinate and unbelieving, not only under the sight and consideration of the most miraculous outward operations, [21] but also under our personal participation in their benefits and fruits. Men may have their *bodies* cured by *miracles*, when their *souls* are not cured by *grace*.

3. Healing is thus placed distinctly by itself, and not cast under the common head of "miracles," because ordinarily there were some *outward means and tokens of it*, that were to be made use of in the exercise of this gift. Such were —

(1.) *Laying on of hands*. Our Savior himself in healing the sick generally "laid his hands on them," Mat 9.18; Luk 4.40. And he gave the same order to his disciples, that they should "lay their hands on those who were sick, and heal them;" which was practiced by them accordingly.

(2.) *Anointing with oil*: "They anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them," Mark 6.13. And the *elders* of the church, with whom this gift was continued, were to come to the one who was sick, and praying over him, "anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord," and he would be saved, Jas 5.14-15.

Some contend for the continuance of this ceremony, or *anointing* those who are sick by the elders of the church; but this is without ground or warrant. For although it is their duty to *pray in a special manner* for those of their flocks who are *sick*, and it is the duty of those who are *sick*, to call for them for that purpose, yet the application of the outward ceremony was not instituted as the means of an *uncertain* cure — which all *natural* means to that end are. Rather, this ceremony was a pledge and token of a *certain healing* and recovery. [22] And so, where there is not an infallible faith of this occurring, when the healing may not ensue, it turns an ordinance into a lie. For if a recovery follows ten times upon this *anointing*, but fails just once, the institution is rendered a lie, a false testimony; and the other recoveries are shown not to depend on observing the ceremony. For these reasons, I judge that this gift of healing, though belonging to miraculous operations in general, is everywhere reckoned as a *distinct gift* by itself. And from that place in James, I am apt to think that this gift was communicated in a special manner to the *elders of churches*, even those who were ordinary and fixed, because it was of so great a use and gave such singular comfort to those who were poor and persecuted; which was the condition of many churches and their members in those days.

Fifthly. Miracles ensue by the "effectual working of mighty powers," [23] or "powerful works." For the meaning of this word, rendered "*miracles*" here, the reader may consult our *Exposition on Hebrews*, 2.4. I will not transcribe from there what is already declared, nor is it necessary to add anything. We have also previously spoken in general concerning this *gift of miracles*; so we will not insist much further on it here. Nor is it necessary to address here the nature, end, and use of miracles in general, which has also been done in

part before. Therefore, I will only observe a few things as to the gift itself, and its use in the church, which alone are our present concern. And —

1. As we observed before, this gift did not consist in any *inherent power* or faculty of the mind, so that those who received it would have an ability of their own to work or effect such miracles when and as they saw good. This is disclaimed by the apostles, Acts 3.12. [24] And therefore, supposing that it was would overthrow the very nature of miracles: for a miracle is an immediate effect of *divine power*, exceeding all created abilities. And whatever is not so, even though it may be strange or wonderful, is not a miracle. Only Jesus Christ had in his own person a power of working miracles when, and where, and how he pleased, because "God was with him," Act 10.38 or "the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily." Col 2.9

2. As for the working of every miracle in particular, there was a *special act of faith* required in those who worked it. This is that faith which is called "the faith of miracles." "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains," 1Cor 13.2. Now, this faith was not a strong *fixing of the imagination* that such a thing should be done, as some have blasphemously dreamed; nor was it a faith resting merely on the promises of the word, making particular application of them to times, seasons, and occasions, in which it differs in no way from the ordinary grace of faith. Rather, this was the true nature of it: it was generally resolved into the *promises of the word*, and the power of Christ declared in this word that such and such things would be worked in general. Thus in the working of any miracle, it always had a *particular, immediate revelation* for its warranty and security. Without such an *immediate revelation* or divine impulse and impression, all attempts at miraculous operations are in vain; they are only the means for Satan to insinuate his delusions.

No man, therefore, could work any *miracle*, nor attempt to do so in faith, without an *immediate revelation* that divine power would be exerted in this, and exercised in its operation. Yet I do not suppose it was necessary for this inspiration and *revelation* to precede the acting of this faith *in order of time*, though it did precede the operation of the miracle itself. Indeed, the inspiration itself consisted in the *elevation of faith* to apprehend divine power in such a case, and for such an end, which the Holy Ghost did not grant to anyone, except when he designed to work this way. Thus Paul at once acted on faith, apprehended divine power, and at the same time struck Elymas the sorcerer blind by a miraculous operation, Acts 13.9-11. [25]

Being "filled with the Holy Ghost," verse 9 — that is, having received an impression and warranty from the Spirit — Paul exercised that act of faith at whose presence the Holy Spirit would effect that miraculous operation which Paul believed. Therefore, this was the nature of this gift: some persons were endowed by the Holy Ghost with that *special faith* which was prepared to receive impressions and intimations of His exercising His power in this or that miraculous operation.

Those who had this faith could not work miracles *when*, and *where*, and *how* they pleased. They could only *infallibly signify* what the Holy Ghost would do, and so they were the outward instruments of the execution of the Spirit's power.

3. The *apostles* had all their gifts of the Spirit in an eminent degree and manner, above all others. As Paul says, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all." Yet it appears that there were some *other persons* distinct from them who had this gift of working miracles in a particular manner. For it is not only reckoned here as a particular, distinct gift of the Holy Ghost, but also the persons who had received it are

reckoned as distinct from the *apostles* and other officers of the church, 1Cor 12.28-29. [26] Not that I think this gift constituted them officers in the church, enabling them to exercise power in gospel administrations; only, they were *brethren of the church*, made eminent by partaking of this gift for the end to which it was ordained. The Holy Spirit effected miraculous operations by the ministry of these persons, on those occasions which seemed fitted to His infinite wisdom. And this was besides what was done of the same kind, by the apostles and evangelists the world over.

4. *The use of this gift* in the church at that time and season was manifold. For the principles which believers proceeded on, and the doctrines they professed, were *new and strange* to the world, and such that they had mighty prejudices raised against them in the minds of men. The persons by whom these doctrines were maintained and asserted were generally, as to their outward condition, poor and contemptible in the world. The churches themselves, as to their members, were few in number, encompassed by multitudes of scoffers and persecuting idolaters. Their members were also newly converted, and many of them but weak in the faith. In this state of things, this *gift of miracles* was exceedingly useful, and necessary to the propagation of the gospel, to the vindication of the truth, and the establishment of those who believed; for —

(1.) By occasionally worked miracles, the people round about who did not yet believe were called in, as it were, to a due consideration of what was done and what was designed by it. Thus when the noise [27] was first spread abroad about the apostles speaking with tongues, the "multitude came together, and were confounded," Acts 2.6. So too the multitude gathered together at Lystra upon the curing of the cripple by Paul and Barnabas, thinking them to have been gods, Acts 14.11. Therefore, when any were

thus amazed by seeing the miracles that were worked, hearing that they were done in confirmation of the doctrine of the gospel, they could not help but inquire into it with diligence, and cast out those prejudices which they had entertained against it before.

(2.) Miracles gave *authority* to the ministers of the church. Though on outward accounts they were *despised* by the great, wise, and learned men of the world, it was made evident by these divine operations, that their ministry was of God; and what they taught was approved by Him. And these two things were effected: namely, that a sufficient, indeed, an eminently cogent ground and reason was given for why men should impartially inquire into the doctrine of the gospel, and an evidence was given that its *teachers* were approved by God. Where this happened, it could only be that their own prejudices against the gospel, or those they might receive from others, must of necessity be prevailed against and conquered. This is, unless men were signally captivated under the power of Satan, 2Cor 4.4, or given up by God judicially to blindness and hardness of heart. And because many of the Jews were thus hardened and blinded at that time, [28] it is marvellous to consider the artifices Satan used among the *Gentiles* — false and lying signs and wonders, with many other ways — to take away from the testimony given to the gospel by these miraculous operations. And this is what *miracles* were designed for towards *unbelievers* — namely, to take away *prejudices* against the doctrine of the gospel, and the persons by whom it was taught, thus disposing the minds of men to attend to it and receive it. For miracles were never means instituted by God to *ingenerate faith* in anyone; but only to provoke and prevail with men to attend without prejudice to that by which it was to be worked. For "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom 10.17.

And, therefore, whatever miracles were worked, if the word preached was not received, if that did not accompany them in its powerful operation, they were but despised. Thus some, upon hearing the apostles speak with tongues, mocked and said, "These men are full of new wine," Acts 2.13. Yet upon preaching the word (which ensued), they were converted to God. And the apostle Paul tells us that if there was nothing but miraculous speaking with tongues in the church, an unbeliever coming in would say they were all mad, 1Cor 14.23 — but by the word of prophecy, he would have been convinced, judged, and converted to God, verses 24, 25.

(3.) Miracles were of singular use to confirm and establish in the faith, those who were weak and newly converted. Because they were assaulted on every hand by Satan, the world, and it may be by their dearest relations, and that being done with contempt, scorn, and cruel mocking, it was a singular confirmation and establishment, to behold the *miraculous operations* which were worked in the approval of the doctrine which they professed. Hereby a sense of it was more and more let into and impressed on their minds, until by habitual experience of its goodness, power, and efficacy, they were established in the truth.

Sixthly. Prophecy is added in the sixth place: "To another, *prophecy*;" [29] that is, this is given by the same Spirit. We have sufficiently treated this *gift of prophecy* before. Only, I will take it here in its largest sense, both as it signifies *a faculty of prediction* — or foretelling future things upon divine revelation — and as *an ability to declare the mind of God from the word*, by the special and immediate revelation of the Holy Ghost. The first of these was rarer, the latter was more ordinary and common. It may be that there were few churches in which, besides their elders and teachers (by virtue of their office) some of these prophets were not present. Of those who had this

gift of prophecy, enabling them in an eminent manner to declare the mind of God from the Scriptures for the edification of the church, it is said that there were some in the church at Antioch, Acts 13.1-2; and many of them in the church at Corinth, 1Cor 14. This gift was of singular use in the church. And therefore, as to its end of edifying the church, it is preferred by our apostle above all other gifts of the Spirit whatsoever, 1Cor 12.31; 14.1, 39. For it had a double use —

1. The *conviction and conversion* of those who occasionally came into their church assemblies. Those to whom the propagation of the gospel was principally committed, went up and down the world, laying hold of every occasion to preach it to Jews and Gentiles as yet unconverted. And where churches were gathered and settled, the principal work of their teachers was to *edify those who* believed. But because some would come in among them, into their church assemblies, perhaps out of curiosity, perhaps out of worse designs, the apostle declares that of all the ordinances of the church, this ordinance of prophecy was suited to the conviction and conversion of all unbelievers. And it is often blessed to this end, by which this and that man are born in Zion.

2. This *exposition and application* of the word by many — and that is by virtue of the extraordinary assistance of the Spirit of God — was of singular use in the church itself. For if all Scripture given by inspiration from God, so expounded and applied, is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2Tim 3.16 then the more the church enjoys of it, the more its faith, love, obedience, and consolation will be increased.

3. Lastly, *the manner of the exercise* of this gift in the church for its edification, is prescribed and limited by our apostle in 1Cor 14.29-33. [30]

And,

(1.) He would not have the church burdened even with the most *profitable gift* or its exercise; and therefore he determines that not more than two or three at one time be allowed to speak — that is, one after another — so that the church is neither wearied nor burdened, verse 29.

(2.) Because it was possible that some of them who had this gift might *mix something of their own spirits* in their word and ministry, and thus mistake and err from the truth, he requires that the others who had the same gift, and so understood the mind of God, should *judge* what was spoken by them, so that the church might not be led into any error by them: "Let the other judge."

(3.) Order was to be observed in their exercise, and especially that way be given to any *immediate revelation*, verse 30, and no confusion be brought into the church by many speaking at the same time. This direction manifests that the gift was *extraordinary*, and has now ceased — though there is a continuance in the church of ordinary gifts of the same kind, and to the same end, as we will see afterward.

(4.) By observing this *order*, the apostle shows that *all the prophets might exercise their gift* for the instruction and consolation of the church in a proper season, as their *frequent assemblies* would afford them, verse 31.

It might be objected that these things coming in an *extraordinary immediate manner* from the Holy Ghost, it was not in the power of those who received them, to confine them to the order prescribed. This would seem to limit the Holy Spirit in his operations, because they were all to speak as the Spirit gave them ability and utterance, whatever might ensue. Therefore, the apostle assures them by a general principle, that no such thing would follow on a due use and exercise of this gift: "For God," he

says, "is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints," verse 33. It is as if he said, "If such a course were taken, so that any one could speak and prophesy as he pretended to be moved by the Spirit, and to have no one judge what he said, all *confusion*, tumult, and disorder, would ensue from that. But *God is the author* of no such thing; he gives no such gifts; he appoints no such exercise of them that would tend to this." But how will this be prevented, seeing that these things are *extraordinary*, and not in our own power? Indeed, he says, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," verse 32. No one questions that "the spirits of the prophets" intends the exercise of their spiritual gift and ability. The apostle had taught two things concerning the exercise of this gift —

(1.) That it ought to be *orderly*, to avoid confusion;

(2.) That what proceeds from it ought to be *judged by others;*

And he manifests that *both* these may be observed, "because the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." That is, their spiritual gift is so much in their own power, that they might dispose themselves to its exercise with choice and judgment, so as to preserve order and peace, and not be moved as with an *enthusiastic affliction*, and carried outside their own power.

In its exercise, this gift was subject to their own judgment, choice, and understanding. So whatever they expressed by virtue of their spiritual gift, was subject to be *judged* by the other *prophets* that were in the church. In this way, the peace and order of the church were to be preserved, and its edification was to be promoted.

Seventhly. Discerning of spirits is the next gift of the Spirit enumerated here: "To another *discerning of spirits*," [31] that is, the ability and faculty to judge about spirits. On a previous occasion, I gave an account of this gift,

and therefore I will but briefly touch on it here. In those days, all gospel administrations were avowedly executed by virtue of *spiritual gifts*. No man then dared set his hand to this work except those who either really had or highly pretended to a participation of the Holy Ghost; for the administration of the gospel is the *dispensation of the Spirit*. This participation was therefore pleaded by all in preaching the word, whether in private assemblies or publicly to the world. But it also then came to pass, as it did in all the ages of the church, that where God gave anyone the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit, for the reformation or edification of the church, Satan suborned someone to make a pretense to this gift, leading to its trouble and destruction. So it was under the Old Testament, and so was it foretold it would be under the New.

The apostle Peter, having declared the nature and excellence, use and certainty, of that prophecy of old, 2Pet 1.19-21, [32] adds this, "But there were false prophets also among the people," 2Pet 2.1. [33] That is, when God granted that signal privilege to the church, of the immediate revelation of his will to them by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which constituted men *true prophets* of the Lord, Satan stirred up others to pretend to the same *spirit of prophecy* for his own malicious ends. Thus "there were false prophets also among the people." But maybe it will be otherwise now, under the gospel church-state. "No," Peter says, "there will be false teachers among you" — that is, persons pretending to the same *spiritual gift* that the apostles and evangelists had, yet thereby bringing in "damnable heresies." Now, they fathered all their damnable opinions upon immediate *revelations* of the Spirit. This gave occasion for the holy apostle John to give that caution, with his reason for it, which is expressed in 1Joh 4.1-3; [34] we have explained these words before. The church was tried and pestered with this

false pretense to *extraordinary spiritual gifts* so long as there was any occasion to countenance it — namely, so long as such gifts really continued for anyone in the church. What way, then, had God ordained for the preservation and safety of the church, so that it would not be imposed on by any of these *delusions*?

I answer, there was a *standing rule* in the church, by which whatever was or could be offered to it *doctrinally*, might certainly and infallibly be tried, judged, and determined. And this was the *rule of the written* word,[35] according to that everlasting ordinance, "To the law and to the testimony: if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa 8.20. In all ages, this was sufficient for the preservation of the church from all errors and heresies, or damnable doctrines — which it never fell into, nor will it do so, except by the sinful neglect and contempt of this. Moreover, the apostle further directs the application of this rule to present occasions, by advising us to fix on *some fundamental principles* which are likely to be opposed. And if they are not owned and avowed, then avoid such teachers, whatever spiritual gift they may pretend to, 1Joh 4.2-3, 2Joh 9-11.[36]

Yet, because many in those days were weak in the faith, and might be surprised by such pretenses, God had graciously provided and bestowed on *some* the gift mentioned here, maybe in every church — namely, of *discerning of spirits*. By virtue of the extraordinary gift and aid of the Holy Ghost in this, they could make a true judgment about the *spirits* that men pretended to act and to be moved by, whether these were from God or not. And this was of singular use and benefit to the church in those days. For as spiritual gifts abounded, so did a *pretense* to those gifts, which was always accompanied with pernicious designs. In this, therefore, God granted relief

for those who were either less skilful, or less wary, or less able on any account to make a right judgment between those who were really endowed with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and those who falsely pretended to it. For these persons received this gift of discerning spirits, and were placed in the church for this very end: that they might guide and help the others in making a right judgment in this matter. And because the communication of these gifts has ceased, and consequently all pretenses to them have ceased — unless it is by some *phrenetic and enthusiastic* persons whose madness is manifest to all — there is no need for the continuance of this gift of "discerning spirits." That standing infallible rule of the word, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit, are sufficient in every way for our preservation in the truth — unless we give ourselves up to the conduct of corrupt lusts, pride, self-conceit, carnal interest, passions, and temptations, which ruin the souls of men.

The two remaining spiritual gifts here are, *speaking with tongues*, *and their interpretation.* The first communication of this "gift of tongues" to the apostles is particularly described, Acts 2.1-4, etc. Although they were endowed at that time with all other gifts of the Holy Ghost, called "power from above," Acts 1.8, this "gift of tongues" signalized, by the *visible pledge* of it, the joint participation in the same gift by all, and the notoriety of the matter upon that, as described at large in that passage of Acts.

God seems to have laid the foundation of preaching the gospel in this gift, for two reasons:

1. To signify that the grace and mercy of the covenant was now no longer to be *confined to one nation, language, or people*, but to be extended to all nations, tongues, and languages of people under heaven.

2. To testify by what means he would subdue the souls and consciences of men to the obedience of Christ and the gospel, and by *what means* he would maintain his kingdom in the world. Now, this was not by force and might, by external power or armies, but by preaching the word, of which the tongue is the only instrument. And the outward sign of this gift, in tongues *of fire*, evidenced the *light* and *efficacy* with which the Holy Ghost designed to accompany the dispensation of the gospel.

Therefore, although this gift began with the apostles, it was later very much *diffused* to most of those who believed. See Acts 10.46, 19.6; 1Cor 14.1-27. [37] We may observe a few things concerning this gift; such as —

1. The special matter that was expressed by this gift seems to have been the praises of God for his wonderful works of grace by Christ. I have no doubt that the apostles were enabled by virtue of this gift to *declare the gospel* to any people to whom they came, in their own language. Yet, ordinarily, they did not preach or instruct the people by virtue of this gift, but only spoke out *the praises of God*, to the admiration and astonishment of those who were still strangers to the faith. So when they first received the gift, they were heard "speaking the wonderful works of God," Acts 2.11; and the Gentiles who first believed "spoke with tongues, and magnified God," Acts 10.46.

2. These *tongues* were given "for a sign to those who did not believe," 1Cor 14.22. Sometimes those who spoke with tongues did not understand the sense and meaning of the words delivered by themselves, nor were they understood by the church itself in which they were uttered, verses 2, 6-11, etc. But I suppose this was only *sometimes*, and maybe that was mostly when this gift was unnecessarily used; for I do not doubt that the apostles understood full well the things delivered by themselves in diverse tongues.

And all who had this gift, though they might not apprehend the meaning of what they spoke and uttered themselves, yet they were so absolutely under the conduct of the Holy Spirit in the exercise of it, that they did not and could not speak anything by virtue of this gift, except what was according to the mind of God, and tended to his praise, verses 2, 14, 17.

3. Although this gift was excellent in itself, and singularly effectual in the propagation of the gospel to unbelievers, yet in the *assemblies of the church* it was of little or no use, except with respect to the things themselves that were uttered. For as to the principal end of it (to be a *sign* to unbelievers), it was finished and accomplished towards them; and so they had no further need or use for it.

But because many *unbelievers* occasionally came into the assemblies of the church, especially at some freer times, the Holy Ghost would, for their conviction, continue this gift for a season among believers. So that the church might not be disadvantaged by this, He added the other gift mentioned here — namely, "the interpretation of tongues." He endowed either those persons themselves who spoke with tongues, or some others in the same assembly, with an ability to *interpret* and declare to the church the things that were spoken and uttered in that miraculous manner; this is the last gift mentioned here.

But the nature, use, and abuse of these gifts is so largely and distinctly spoken to by the apostle, 1Cor 14.1-27, that I need not insist on them. And I cannot fully do it without an entire exposition of that whole chapter, which the nature of my design will not permit.

1. **Heb 2:3** "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, [4] God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" Owen's exposition is in his *Works* (Goold, 1850-53), vol. 19, ch. 2, p. 331ff.
2. John Owen, *Works*, vol. 19, ch. 2.
3. Λόγος σοφίας [NT:3056,4678].
4. דָּבָר [OT:01697 *dabar* – "word" or "thing"]
5. παῤῥησίαν [NT:3954] – *boldness*.
6. **Act 6:10** And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. [11] Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." [12] And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon *him*, seized him, and brought *him* to the council. [13] They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; [14] "for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." **Act 7:54** When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. **Act 22:22** And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" [23] Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air,
7. **2Cor 12:16** "But be that *as it may*, I did not burden you. Nevertheless [it is said], being crafty, I caught you by cunning!"

8. *Mulct*: money extracted as a penalty; a fine.
9. *Contemn*: to look down on with disdain; despise.
10. Originally, "quit cost": to pay or reimburse – that is, it won't be "worth his while" to seek wisdom.
11. λόγος γνώσεως [NT:3056,1108].
12. This is the verb form, to be made skillful and discerning; it implies being set apart to receive such skilled knowledge.
13. **Act 20:27** "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. **Eph 3:8** To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; **Col 4:2** Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; [3] meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, [4] that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
14. παῤῥησία ἐν πίστει *parrhesia en pistei – boldness in faith*.
15. ὑπόστασις [NT:5287] *substance*, or here, *assurance*.
16. *Pusillanimity*: the vice of being timid and cowardly, and thus not living up to one's full potential.
17. **1Pet 5:1** The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: [2] Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; [3] nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; [4] and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

18. Χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων [NT:5486,2386] – *Charismata iamaton*.
19. *Annumeration*: an addition to a previous number of things.
20. **Mat 8:16** When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, [17] that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities And bore *our* sicknesses."
21. **Luk 16:31** "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"
22. **Jas 5:14-15** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15] And the prayer of faith WILL save the sick, and the Lord WILL raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he WILL BE forgiven. [The verbs "save" and "raise" are indicative future active; "forgiven" is future passive perfect; all indicate actions to be completed without contingencies – WHG].
23. 1Co 12.10;Ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων *energemata dunameon* [NT:1755,1411] literally, "workings of powers".
24. **Act 3:12** So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?
25. **Act 13:9** Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him [10] and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? [11] "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And

immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

26. **1Cor 12:28** And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. [29] *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? [30] Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? [31] But earnestly desire the best gifts.

27. *Noise*: here it means rumors.

28. **Rom 11:7-10** What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. [8] Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day." [9] And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them. [10] Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." **1Thes 2:14-16** For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans, [15] who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, [16] forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up *the measure of* their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

29. Ἄλλῳ δὲ προφητεία *Allo de propheteia* [NT: 4394].

30. **1Cor 14:29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. [30] But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. [31] For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be

encouraged. [32] And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. [33] For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

31. 1Cor 12.10 – Ἄλλῳ δὲ διακρίσεις πνευμάτων *Allo de diakriseis pneumaton* (plural) [NT:1253,4151]

32. **2Pet 1:19** And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; [20] knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, [21] for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

33. **2Pet 2:1** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

34. **1Joh 4:1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

35. In the Reformation, it was the battle-cry, *sola Scriptura*, by Scripture alone.

36. **2Joh 1:9** Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. [10] If anyone comes to you and does not bring this

doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; [11] for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

37. **Act 10:45** And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. [46] For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. **Act 19:6** And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. **1Cor 14:39** Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

Chapter V. The origin, duration, use, and end, of extraordinary spiritual gifts.

The apostle gives a summary account in 1Cor 14.1-27, of those *extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost* which then flourished in the church, and were the life of its extraordinary ministry. Mention may be made of such gifts under other names, but they may be reduced to one of those expressed here. Therefore, this may be admitted as a perfect *catalogue* of them, and comprehensive of that *power* from above which the Lord Christ promised to his apostles and disciples upon his ascension into heaven, Acts 1.8. For he "ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things," Eph 4.10, that is, fill the church with *officers and* gifts, for the perfection of the saints, by the work of the ministry, and the edification of his body, verse 12. For being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he shed forth, or abundantly poured out, those things of which we speak, Acts 2.33. And as they were the great evidences of his acceptance with God, and of his exaltation, seeing the Spirit in them "convinced the world of sin, of

righteousness, and of judgment," so that they were the great means by which He carried on his work among men, as it will be declared afterward.

There was no *certain limited* time for the cessation of these gifts. Those which were unique to the apostles, were commensurate [1] with their lives. None after their decease had either apostolic office, power, or gifts.

The same may be said of the evangelists. Nor do we have any undoubted testimony that any of those gifts which were truly *miraculous*, and in every way above the faculties of men, were communicated to any believer after the expiration of the generation of those who conversed with Christ in the flesh, or those who received the Holy Ghost by their ministry. It is not unlikely that God might on some occasions, for a longer season, pour out his power in some miraculous operations; and he may still do so, and perhaps does sometimes. But the *superstition* and folly of some ensuing ages, inventing and divulging countless false and foolish miracles, proved a most disadvantageous prejudice to the gospel, and a means to open a way for Satan to impose endless delusions upon Christians. For true and real miracles, with their becoming circumstances, [2] were the great means that won and reconciled a regard and honor for Christian religion in the world. And thus the pretense of those "miracles" which were either absolutely false, or whose occasions, ends, matter, or manner, were unbecoming to the greatness and holiness of Him who is the true author of all miraculous operations, is the greatest dishonor to religion that anyone can invent. But although all these gifts and operations *ceased* in some respect — some of them absolutely, and some as to the immediate manner of communication and degree of excellence — yet so far as the edification of the church was concerned in them, something *analogous* to those gifts was and is continued. The one who gave "some *to be* apostles, and some prophets, and

some evangelists," also gave "some *to be* pastors and teachers." And just as he furnished the former with *extraordinary gifts*, so far as anything of a similar kind is needful for the continual edification of the church, he bestows it on the latter also, as will be declared.

And these gifts of the Spirit, added to his grace in real holiness, were the glory, honor, and beauty of the church of old. Men have only deceived themselves and others when they have feigned a glory and beauty of the church in other things. And whatever any may think or say, where these gifts of the Holy Ghost are neglected and lost, which are the ornaments of the church, her "clothing of wrought gold," and her "raiment of needlework" [3] — and they think to adorn her instead with the *meretricious* [4] *paint of pompous ceremonies*, with outward grandeur, wealth, and power — she has utterly fallen from her chastity, purity, and integrity. But it is evident that this is the state of many churches in the world; they are therefore worldly and carnal, not spiritual or evangelical. Power, force, and wealth, under various pretenses and names — the *gifts*, in this case, of *another spirit* — are their life and glory; but indeed, they are their death and shame. I do not deny that it is lawful for ministers of the gospel to enjoy *earthly possessions* which they attain by any commendable way among other men.

Nor are they required (except in extraordinary cases) to part with the right and use of their temporal goods just because they are ministers of Christ. Though those who are ministers, will not indeed deny that they ought to use them in a special manner, beyond other men, to the glory of Christ and the honor of the gospel. Nor will I ever question what the Scripture is so express about — namely, that those who "labor in the word and doctrine"

should have a convenient, and indeed, an honorable subsistence provided for them for their work's sake, according to the best ability of the church.

In like manner, it is also granted that the Lord Christ has committed all that *power* which he exercises in this world, with respect to the edification of the church, to the church itself. It cannot be supposed that this power is any other than spiritual, over the souls and consciences of men — not without a virtual renunciation of the gospel and faith in Christ Jesus as the head and king of the church. And therefore this *power be cannot exercised*, or in any way be made effectual, except by virtue of the spiritual gifts we address. And thus it disorders the church for men to turn this *spiritual power*, which is to be exercised only by virtue of *spiritual gifts*, into an external coercive power over the persons, bodies, liberties, and lives of men — to be exercised by law-courts, in ways, forms, and manners, that are utterly foreign to the gospel and to all evangelical administrations, without the least pretense or appearance of the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in this. Indeed, this is done by persons by whom these gifts are hated and derided, acting with pride, scorn, and contempt for the disciples of Christ; and beyond this, being utterly ignorant of the true nature and use of all gospel administrations. And so, instead of a house of spiritual worship, in some instances the church is turned into "a den of thieves." Mat 21.13

Moreover, where earthly revenues are annexed to this, containing all food and fuel for corrupt lusts, with all those things that satisfy the minds of worldly, sensual men, as a fit reward for these carnal administrations — as it is at this day in the *church of Rome* — all use of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is excluded; and the church is brought into extreme desolation. Although these things are as contrary to the gospel as darkness is to light, yet the world (for many reasons not now to be insisted on), is *willing to be*

deceived in this matter. Thus it is generally apprehended that there is nothing so pernicious to the church, so justly to be watched against and rooted out, so disliked, as Rome's horrible apostasies in the corrupt depravation of all evangelical administrations. This was not the state, this was not the condition, of the primitive churches. Their *life* consisted in the grace of the Spirit, and their *glory* in his *gifts*.

None of their leaders ever once dreamed of that new kind of beauty, glory, and power, consisting in countless superstitious ceremonies, instead of religious worship; worldly grandeur, instead of humility and self-denial; and open *tyranny* over the consciences and persons of men, in place of spiritual authority made effectual in the power of Christ, by virtue of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

At this day, there are many sore *divisions* in the world, among and between the professors of Christian religion — about the doctrine and worship of the gospel, and also about the discipline of the gospel. It is acknowledged by all, that these *divisions are* evil in themselves, and they are the cause of great evils, hindrances to the gospel, and to all its effects in the world. Doubtless it is a thing to be greatly lamented, that most of those who are called Christians, have departed from the great rule of "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph 4.3 The one who does not pray always, who is not ready with his utmost endeavor to remedy this evil, to remove this great obstruction of the benefit of the gospel, is scarcely worthy of the name Christian. The *common way* insisted on to this end, is that those who have the most force and power should set up *standards* and *measures* of agreement, compelling others to comply with them by all means of severity and violence. And because determining and settling this matter is

committed to them, they judge the highest offenders to be those who refuse to do so. This is the way of Antichrist and those who follow him in this.

Others, with more moderation and wisdom (but little success), endeavor to *reconcile* the parties at variance — some, more, or all of them — by certain middle ways of mutual condescension which they have discovered. Some things they *blame* in all, and some things they *commend* in all; some things they would have them do, and some things omit: all for the sake of peace and love. And this design carries with it so fair and pleadable a pretense, that those who have once engaged in it, are apt to think *they alone* are the true lovers of Christianity in general, the only sober and indifferent persons — that they are fit to *umpire* all the differences in the world, in a few propositions which they have framed. And so wedded are some wise and holy men to these apprehensions of reconciling Christians by their *conceived methods*, that nothing will discourage them in their design — no experience of endless disappointments, of new and increasing differences and digladiations, [5] of forming new parties, of reviving old animosities — all of which roll in upon them continually. "What then?" some will say; "would you have these *divisions* and *differences* among us continued and perpetuated, when you acknowledge they are so evil and pernicious?" I say, God forbid. Yes, we pray for, and will always endeavor for their removal and taking away. Yet on the other hand I say this, whether men will hear it or whether they will forbear it: there is but *one way* to effect so blessed and desirable a work; and until it is engaged in, let men say what they please about *reconciliation*, the worst of men will revile and persecute those who are better than themselves, to the end of the world.

And this way is that all churches should endeavor to reduce themselves to the *primitive pattern*. Let us all but consider what the life and spirit of those

churches was, what their honor, glory, and order consisted in, making it our joint design to walk in the principle of that grace of the Spirit in which they walked, in the exercise and use of those *gifts* of the Spirit which were the spring and virtue of all their administrations — renouncing whatever is foreign to and inconsistent with these things. Then that grace and unity which Christ has purchased for professors, will quickly enter into them. But these things are only mentioned here in passing, and are not to be further pursued.

These spiritual gifts the apostle calls the "powers of the world to come," Heb 6.4-5; that is, those effectual powerful principles and operations which uniquely belong to the kingdom of Christ and the administration of the gospel, those things by which they were to be set up, planted, advanced, and propagated in the world. The Lord Christ came and wrought the mighty work of our salvation in his *own person*. And thus he laid the foundation of his church on himself, by the confession of him as the Son of God. Concerning himself and his work, he preached and caused to be preached, a doctrine that was opposed by all the world, because of its truth, mystery, and holiness. Yet it was the design of God to break through all those oppositions, to cause this doctrine to be received and submitted to, and Jesus Christ to be believed in, to the ruin and destruction of the kingdom of Satan in the world. Now, this was a work that could not be wrought without putting forth and exercising mighty power. Nothing concerning this remains to be inquired into, except what sort of power this should be. Now,

- the conquest that the Lord Christ aimed at was *spiritual*, over the souls and consciences of men;
- the enemies he had to conflict with were *spiritual*: principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places; the god of this world, the

prince of this world, who ruled in the children of disobedience;

- the kingdom which he had to erect was *spiritual*, and not of this world;
- all its laws and rules, with their administrations and ends, were *spiritual* and heavenly.

The gospel that was to be propagated was a doctrine not concerning this world, nor the things of this world, nor of anything natural or political, except as they were merely subordinate to other ends. Rather, it was heavenly and mysterious, directing men only in a tendency according to the mind of God, to the eternal enjoyment of him.

On this it will easily appear what kind of power is necessary to this work, and for attaining these ends. The One who, upon speaking one word, could have engaged in his work and for his assistance "more than twelve legions of angels," Mat 26.53 by outward force and arms, could easily have subdued the whole world into an external observance of him and his commands, and ruled men at his pleasure. He could have done all this, and may do whenever he pleases. And yet, if he had done it, that would have tended nothing towards the ends he designed. He might, indeed, have had a glorious empire in the world, comprehending all the dominions that ever were or can be on the earth. Yet it would have been of the same kind and nature as that which Nero had — the greatest monster of villainy in nature. Nor would it have been any great matter for the Son of God to have out-done the Romans or the Turks, or similar conspiracies of wicked oppressors. All those who yet think it is fitting to use external force over the persons, lives, and bodies of men, in order to reduce them to the obedience of Christ and the gospel, put the greatest dishonor on him imaginable, and change the whole nature of his design and kingdom. Christ will neither own nor accept any subject whose obedience is not a free act of his own will,

and who is made willing by himself in the day of his power. His design, and his only design in this world, to the glory of God, is to erect a kingdom, throne, and rule in the souls and consciences of men; to have obedience from them in faith, love, and spiritual delight, proceeding from their own choice, understandings, wills, and affections; an obedience that should be internal, spiritual, mystical, and heavenly, with respect solely to things that are unseen and eternal; in which he and his laws would be infinitely preferred before all earthly things and considerations.

Now, this is a matter that all earthly powers and empires could never desire, design, or put a hand to. It is what renders the kingdom of Christ, of another nature: as much more excellent and better than all earthly kingdoms, as liberty is better than bondage; as the mind is more excellent than the outward carcass; as spiritual and eternal things are better than carnal and temporary things; as the wisdom and holiness of God are more excellent than the folly and lusts of men.

Therefore, this was the design of Christ; this was the nature and work of the gospel which was to be propagated, in which carnal power and outward force could be of no use. Indeed, its exercise was inconsistent with, dishonorable to, and destructive of the whole design. In his design, the work to be accomplished on the minds and souls of men, is incomparably greater than conquering worlds with force and arms.

And thus it is inquired what power the Lord Christ employed in this, what means and instruments he used to accomplish his design, and to erect that kingdom or church-state which, being promised of old, was called "the world to come," Heb 2.5 or the "new world," Mat 19.28 "a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." 2Pet 3.13 And I say, it was those gifts of the Holy Ghost which we have treated; these were those "powers"

of this "world to come." It was by them, or in their exercise, that the Lord Christ erected his empire over the souls and consciences of men, destroying both the work and kingdom of the devil. It is true, it is the word of the gospel itself that is the rod of his strength, which is sent out from Zion to erect and dispense his rule Psa 110.2 — but that hidden power which made the word effectual in its dispensation, consisted in those gifts of the Holy Ghost. Men may despise them or think lightly of them while they please; they are those powers which the Lord Christ in his wisdom thought fit alone, to engage in propagating the gospel, and setting up his kingdom in the world.

The recovery and return of the people from the captivity of Babylon was a type of the spiritual redemption of the church by Jesus Christ. And God declares how he effected that as a type of this, Zec 4.6: "Not by army, 6 nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." Much more was *this* work to be effected by his Spirit. So, after his resurrection, the Lord Christ tells his apostles that they were to be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth;" that is, all the world over, Acts 1.8. But how will they be able to bear testimony to the world, so that their witness will be received and become effectual? He says, "You will receive power" for this end. I have given you authority to preach the word before; and now I will give you such an ability for it, that none will be able to withstand or resist it; and this is after the Holy Ghost has come upon you — that is, in the communication of those gifts by which you may be enabled for your work. The gifts consisted in that "mouth and wisdom" which he promised he would give them, "which all their adversaries were not able to refute or resist," Luk 21.15.

Therefore, what I will close this discourse with, will be a brief endeavor to declare how those gifts were the spiritual powers of the gospel for all the ends we mentioned before, as designed by Jesus Christ. From this it will appear how little there was of the wisdom, skill, power, or authority of men, in the whole work of propagating the gospel and planting the church of Christ. Afterward we will manifest how, by the dispensation of the other more ordinary gifts of the Spirit, both the gospel and the church are continued and preserved in the world.

First. The persons whom the Lord Christ chose, called, and designed for this work, were enabled to it by those gifts. Just as no mortal men have of themselves, any sufficiency for such a work, so the persons particularly called to it by Jesus Christ lay under all the disadvantages that any persons could possibly be liable to in such an undertaking: for —

1. All of them were unlearned and ignorant; which the Jews took notice of, Acts 4.13, and which the Gentiles despised them for.

2. They were poor, and of no reputation in the world; this made them contemned by all sorts of persons. And,

3. In many instances, they seem to have been cowardly [7] and fearful; which they all manifested when they so shamefully fled and left their Master in his distresses;[Mat 26.56] the chief of them also swore that he did not know him.[Mat 26.72]

Now, it is easily understood what great disadvantages these were to undertaking so great a work as they were called to — indeed, how impossible it was for them, under these qualifications, to do anything in pursuit of it. Therefore, by the communication of these gifts to them, all these impediments arising from themselves were removed. They were furnished with endowments of quite another nature, by which they were

eminently filled with that spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, which surpassed all the wisdom that was of the world or in the world, by whatever ways or means it could be attained.

(1.) They had and declared a wisdom which none of the princes of this world were acquainted with, 1Cor 2.1-8, 13. During Christ's abiding in the flesh with them, they could not understand a plain parable, and were ever and at times at no small loss about the sense and meaning of their Master. They had very low and carnal apprehensions about his person, work, and office. And yet, they were now filled with a knowledge of all heavenly mysteries, and with wisdom to declare, manage, and maintain them against all opposers. Kings, princes, rulers of synagogues, were now all the same to them. They had a mouth and wisdom given to them which none of their adversaries could resist. Wherever they came, in all nations, to all sorts of people, of all languages, they were now enabled, in that nation's own tongue and speech, to declare and preach the gospel to them, always being filled with a treasure of wisdom and spiritual mysteries which they could draw from as every occasion required.

(2.) Because they were poor, the difficulties with which such a condition is attended were also utterly taken away by this means. For although they had neither silver nor gold from their work or employment, and their outward wants and distresses were rather increased by this, yet their minds and souls were so raised above the world by this communication of the Spirit, and filled with such a contempt for all the desirable things in the world, and of all the pride of men on their account, that their lack of possessions and outward enjoyments made them only more ready and expedited for their work. This is also why those who had possessions, sold

them, and gave their price to the poor, so that they might not be a hindrance to them in their design.

And hence it also was that, even after the resurrection of Christ, some were inquiring about a temporal kingdom in which, no doubt, a good part of the kingdom's glory, power, and advantages would fall to their share [8] — as most inquire about who still continue to dream of such a kingdom in this world. But immediately upon the communication of these gifts, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy of shame for the name of Christ, when they were imprisoned, whipped, and despitefully used, Acts 5.40-41.

(3.) They had boldness, courage, and constancy given to them in place of that cowardice and fear which they revealed before. The Jews took notice of this, and were astonished at it, Act 4.13. [9] And they had reason to be, if we consider the power and authority of that work for which they were then assaulted, with Peter's speech to them, verses 8-12, which he spoke as filled with the Holy Ghost. See also Acts 5.28-32. [10] And during the whole course of their ministry throughout the world, the same undaunted courage, resolution, and constancy, always and in all things accompanied them.

Therefore, in the first place, these gifts may be esteemed the "powers of the world to come." This is because those to whom the work was committed — of preaching the gospel, propagating its mystery, converting the nations, planting churches, and in all, erecting the kingdom of Christ — were enabled by these gifts, to the utmost capacity of human nature, to discharge, effect, and accomplish the work committed to them. By virtue and in the strength of these spiritual abilities, they set upon the whole kingdom of Satan and darkness in the world, contending with the gates of hell and all the powers of the earth, contending with the wisdom of the Greeks and the religion of the Jews, with success against both. They did not go out with

force and arms, or carnal power; they threatened no man, menaced no man, with the carnal weapons of force or penalties. They had no baits or allurements of wealth, power, or honor, to inveigle [11] the minds of corrupt and sensual men. But, as it was said, in the warranty and power of these spiritual gifts, they both attempted and accomplished this work. And things still continue in the same condition, according to their proportion. As men are furnished with spiritual abilities and gifts from the Holy Ghost, so comes their fitness for the work of the ministry, and no other. If any would undertake this work without this provision of abilities for it, they will never be owned by Christ, nor be of the least use in the employment they assume. A ministry devoid of spiritual gifts is sufficient evidence of a church under a degenerating apostasy. But these things will be further spoken to afterward.

Secondly. By these gifts, all their administrations, especially the preaching of the gospel, were rendered effectual for their proper end. The preaching of the word, which is the "sword of the Spirit," was the great instrument by which they wrought and accomplished their designed work in the conviction and conversion of the souls of men. It may therefore be inquired what it was that gave efficacy and success to the word as preached or dispensed by them. Now, it would seem it must either be that its subject-matter was so suited to the reasons and understandings of men, that they could not help but accept it upon its proposal; or else the manner by which they declared it was with such persuasive artifices, that they were fit to prevail with the minds of men to give their assent, or to impose upon them against the best of their defenses. But the apostle declares that it was utterly otherwise in both regards: for the matter of the doctrine of the gospel is folly to the minds of carnal men, and it is in every way fit to be despised,

1Cor 1.18 — all men are this way, until renewed by the gospel itself. As for the manner of its declaration, they did not use enticing words of human wisdom, nor any arts of oratory, nor dresses of rhetoric or eloquence in this — nor would they, lest the effects worked by the word, would seem to proceed from them in any measure, 1Cor 2.4-5. [12] Therefore, not to mention the internal efficacious power of grace which God secretly exerts for the conversion of his elect (the consideration of which does not belong to our present design), I say it was by virtue of those *gifts*, that the administration of the gospel was so efficacious and successful; for —

1. From those gifts proceeded that authority over the minds of men which the word was accompanied with. When the Lord Christ was anointed by the Spirit to preach the gospel, it is said, "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes," Mat 7.29. Whatever his outward appearance was in the flesh, the word — as administered by him — was attended with such an authority over the minds and consciences of men, that they could not help but sense it. And so it was with the primitive dispensers of the gospel. By virtue of these spiritual gifts, they preached the word "in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," 1Cor 2.4. Accompanying their preaching, was an evidence or demonstration of a power and authority that was from God and his Spirit. Men could not help but conclude that there was something in it which was over them or above them, which they must yield or submit to, and not contend with. It is true, the power of the gospel was hidden from those who were perishing, whose minds the god of this world had effectively blinded, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine on them," 2Cor 4.3-4. This is why it came to pass that the word was rejected by many.

Yet, wherever God was pleased to make it effectual, it was by a sense of a divine authority accompanying its administration, by virtue of those spiritual gifts. And therefore our apostle shows that when men prophesied, or declared the mind of God from the word by the gift of prophecy, unbelievers "fell down and, worshipping God, reported that God was truly in them," 1Cor 14.24-25. They were aware of a divine authority which they could not stand before, nor withstand.

2. From this also proceeded that life and power for conviction which the word was accompanied with in their dispensation of it. Shortly it became the arrows of Christ, which were sharp in the hearts of men. As men found an authority in the dispensation of the word, so they felt and experienced an efficacy in the truths that were dispensed. By it, their minds were enlightened, their consciences awakened, their minds convinced, their lives judged, and the secrets of their hearts made manifest (as described in 1Cor 14.24-25), until they cried out in multitudes, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Hereby the Lord Christ in his kingdom and majesty rode prosperously, conquering and to conquer with the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness, subduing the souls of men to his obedience — making them free, ready, and willing, in the day of his power. These were the forces and weapons that he used in establishing his kingdom, which were "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down of imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2Cor 10.4-5. So the apostle describes the success of these administrations as an absolute conquest, in which all opposition is broken, all strongholds and fortifications are demolished, and the whole is reduced to due obedience; for by this means all things were effected. All the

strongholds of sin in the minds of men, in their natural darkness, blindness, and obstinacy; all the high fortifications of prejudices and vain, proud, lofty imaginations raised in them by Satan — were all cast down by and before gospel administrations, managed by virtue and authority of these spiritual gifts which the Lord Christ ordained to be the powers of his kingdom.

Thirdly. Those which consisted in miraculous operations were suited to fill the world with an apprehension of a divine power accompanying the word, and accompanying those by whom it was administered. And various things to further the gospel depended on this; such as —

1. The world, which was stupid, asleep in sin and security, satisfied with their lusts and idolatries, heedless of anything but present enjoyments, was awakened by this to attend to and inquire into this new doctrine that was proposed to them.

They could not help but take notice that there was something more than ordinary in that sermon which they were summoned to by a miracle. And this was the first and principal use of these miraculous operations. They awakened the dull, stupid world to consider the doctrine of the gospel, which otherwise they would have securely neglected and despised.

2. These operations weakened and took away those mighty prejudices which their minds were possessed with by tradition and secular enjoyments What these prejudices were I will not declare here; I have done it elsewhere. It is enough to observe that they were as great, as many, and as effectual, as human nature is capable of in any case. Yet, even though they were sufficient proof against all other means of conviction, they could not help but sink and weaken before the manifest evidence of present divine power, such as these miraculous operations were accompanied with. For even though all the things they clung to, and did so inseparably, and they

thought were to be preferred above anything that could be offered to them, when the divine power appeared against them, they were not able to give them any defense.

Hence, upon these operations one of these two effects ensued:

(1.) Those who were shut up under their obstinacy and unbelief were filled with tormenting convictions, and did not know what to do to relieve themselves They could not withstand the evidence of miracles, and yet they would not admit what they tendered and confirmed; which is why they were filled with uneasiness and bewilderment. So the rulers of the Jews revealed they were bewildered by the cure of the helpless person at the gate of the temple. They said, "What will we do to these men? For indeed we cannot deny that a notable miracle has been done by them," Acts 4.16.

(2.) The minds of others were exceedingly prepared for receiving the truth, the advantages to that purpose being too many to be insisted on here.

3. They were a great means of taking away the scandal of the cross. It is sufficiently known that this is what the world was principally offended at in the gospel. "Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." 1Cor 1.23

Nothing could possibly have been a matter of so high an offense to the Jews, as to offer them a crucified Messiah, whom they expected as a glorious king to subdue all their enemies. Nor in their present mindset, will they ever receive him on any other terms. It seemed part of the most extreme folly to the Grecians, to propose such great and immortal things in the name of someone who was himself crucified as a malefactor. And it was thought a shame, on all hands, for any wise man to profess or own such a religion as came from the cross. Yet, after all this blustering of weakness and folly, when they saw this doctrine of the cross owned by God, and

witnessed to by manifest effects of divine power, they could not help but begin to think that men need not be so ashamed of what God so openly avowed.

And all these things made way to let the word into the minds and consciences of men where, by its own efficacy, it gave them a satisfying experience of its truth and power.

From these few instances, to which many of a similar nature might be added, it is manifest how these spiritual gifts were the "powers of the world to come" — the means, weapons, and arms, that the Lord Christ made use of for subduing the world, destroying the kingdom of Satan and darkness, and for planting and establishing his own church on earth. And as these gifts alone were suited to his design, so his accomplishment of that design, by those gifts, is a glorious evidence of his divine power and wisdom, as might easily be demonstrated.

1. *Commensurate*: co-extensive; that is, they died with the apostles.
2. *Becoming*: in keeping with accepted standards of what is right or proper.
3. KJV **Psa 45:13** The king's daughter *is* all glorious within: her clothing *is* of wrought gold. 14 She shall be brought to the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought to You.
4. *Meretricious*: tastelessly showy; deceptively pleasing; an allusion to the garb of a harlot.
5. *Digladiation*: a violent dispute or argument.
6. Hebrew *chayil* [OT:02428], often translated here as "might."
7. Originally, "pusillanimous."
8. **Mat 19:27** Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" **Act 8:18** When Simon [Magus] saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money;
9. **Act 4:13** Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.
10. **Act 5:28** saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" 29 But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 "And we are His witnesses to

these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

11. *Inveigle*: to influence or urge by subtle persuasion.

12. **1Cor 2:4** And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Chapter VI. Of ordinary gifts of the Spirit

Of ordinary gifts of the Spirit — The grant, institution, use, benefit, end, and continuance of the ministry.

What next lies before us is the consideration of those ordinary gifts of the Spirit which are annexed to the ordinary powers and duties of the church. They are called "ordinary", not as if they were absolutely common to all, or were not much to be esteemed, or as if that was a diminishing term in any way; but we call them *ordinary* on a double account:

1. In distinction from those absolutely extraordinary gifts which exceeded the whole power and faculties of the souls of men — such as healings, tongues, and miracles. For otherwise, ordinary gifts are of the same nature as most of those gifts which were bestowed on the apostles and evangelists, differing only in degree. Every true gospel ministry now has gifts of the same kind as the apostles', in a degree and measure that is sufficient for their work, except those mentioned.

2. They are called *ordinary* because of their continuance in the ordinary state of the church; and they will continue to the consummation of all

things.

Now, my design is to treat particularly the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But because there is a gift of Christ which is the foundation and subject of the others, something must first be said briefly about that. This gift of Christ is the *ministry* of the church. I will not consider the nature of this office at large, but only speak to it as it is a gift of Christ. And I will do this by a little illustration given in that passage of the apostle where this gift and its communication is declared:

Eph 4.7-16, "But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore he says, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. (Now what does it mean that he ascended, but that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is also the same that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some *to be* apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we will be children no more, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

There is no other place of Scripture in which at one view the grant, institution, use, benefit, end, and continuance of the ministry is so clearly and fully represented. And the end of this whole discourse is to declare that the gift and grant of the ministry and ministers, of the office and the persons to discharge it, is an eminent and most useful fruit and effect of the mediatory power of Christ, with his love and care towards his church. Those of whom the apostle speaks ("to every one of us") are the officers or ministers whom he afterward enumerates, although the words may in some sense be extended to all believers; but principally the ministry and ministers of the church are intended. And it is said, "grace is given" to them. It is evident that "grace" here does not intend sanctifying, saving grace, but partaking of a gracious favor with respect to a special end. This is how the word is frequently used in this case by our apostle, Rom 15.15; Gal 2.9; Eph 3.8. [1] This gracious favor that we are made partakers of, this *trust*, is freely committed to us by way of grace; and that is "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," to every one as the Lord Christ measures out the gift of it to them freely. Thus, in general, the ministry was granted to the church. The particular account of it is given in the ensuing verses. And —

First. It is declared to be a gift of Christ: "And he himself gave," Eph 4.11. It is the great fundamental of all church order, power, and worship, that the gift and grant of Christ is the origin of the ministry. If it had not been so given by Christ, it would not have been lawful for any of the sons of men to institute such an office, or appoint such officers.

If any had attempted to do so, what they did would have been a nullity. And so their attempt would have been expressly against the headship of Christ, or his supreme authority over the church. This is why it was promised of old, that he would give ministers (shepherds) to the church, Jer

3.15, [2] as well as signally foretelling it in the psalm from which these words are taken, Psa 68.18. And just as doing it is an act of his mediatory power, as declared here and in Mat 28.18, so it was a fruit of his care, love, and bounty, 1Cor 12.28. It follows from this, that offices in the church which are not of Christ's giving and institution, and officers who are not of his gift or grant, by provision and furnishing, indeed have no place in it; and it also follows that they are set up in opposition to his authority and in contempt of his care and bounty. For doing so arises out of an apprehension both that men have a power in the church which is not derived from Christ — which imposes servants on him in his own house without his consent — and also that they have more care for the church than he had, since he did not make such provision for them.

If an examination might be admitted by this rule, as it will one day come whether men will it or not, some great names now in the church would scarcely be able to preserve their station. Popes, cardinals, metropolitans, diocesan prelates, archdeacons, commissaries, officials — and I know not what other monstrous products of an incestuous conjunction between secular pride and ecclesiastical degeneracy — would think that they are severely treated to be tried by this rule; but so it must be at last, and that unavoidably so. Indeed, that no man would be so hardy as to once dare attempt setting up officers in the church without the authority of Christ, the eminency of this gift and grant of his is declared in various particular instances. Without it, neither the wisdom, skill, nor power of any or all of the sons of men, can have the least interest in them, or in anything like them.

And this is apparent —

1. From the grandeur of its introduction, or the great and solemn preparation that was made for giving out this gift. It was given by Christ "when he ascended on high, and led captivity captive," Eph 4.8. The words are taken from Psa 68.17-18,

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as at Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive: you have received gifts for men; indeed, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

In the first place, what is intended is the glorious appearance of God on Mount Sinai in giving the law — his descending and ascending for that purpose. But they are applied here to Christ, because all the glorious works of God in and towards the church of old, were either representative or gradually introductive of Christ and the gospel.

Thus the glorious ascending of God from Mount Sinai, after giving the law, was a representation of his "ascending far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," Eph 4.10. And as God then "led captivity captive" in the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who had long held his people in captivity and under cruel bondage, so the Lord Christ now dealt in the destruction and captivity of Satan and all his powers, Col 2.15. [3] Though it is said in the psalm that "he *received* gifts for men," here it is said that "he *gave* gifts to men:" in which no small mystery is couched. For although Christ is God, and is so gloriously represented in the psalm, yet an intimation is given that he would act in a condition in which he was capable of receiving from another, as he did in this matter, Acts 2.33. [4] And so the phrase in the original does more than insinuate: "You have received gifts in Adam" [5] — in the man, or in the human nature. The Hebrew word there, *laqach*, [6] signifies to give as well as to receive, especially when anything

received is to be given. And Christ received this gift in the human nature, to give it to others.

Now, to what end was this glorious theatre (as it were) prepared, and all this preparation made, with all men being called to the preparation of it? It was to set out the greatness of the gift Christ would bestow, and the glory of the work which he would effect. And this was to furnish the church with ministers, and ministers with gifts for the discharge of their office and duty. And it will one day appear that there is more glory, more excellence, in giving one poor minister to a congregation by furnishing him with spiritual gifts for the discharge of his duty, than in the pompous installment of a thousand popes, cardinals, or metropolitans. The worst of men, in the observance of a few outward rites and ceremonies, can do the latter; but only Christ can do the former, and do it because he has ascended on high to that purpose.

2. It appears to be such an eminent gift from its original acquisition. There was a power acquired by Christ for this great donation which the apostle declares: Eph 4.9, "Now, what does that mean that he ascended, but that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?" Having mentioned the ascension of Christ as the immediate cause or fountain of the communication of this gift, verse 8, he found it necessary to trace it to its first origin. He does not, therefore, mention descending into the lower parts of the earth on the occasion of his ascending, as if he seized at the advantage of a word; nor does he speak of the humiliation of Christ absolutely in itself, which he had no occasion for. Rather, he introduces it to show what respect this gift of the ministry and of ministers — of the office, gifts, and persons — had to this ascension.

And Christ's descending into the lower parts of the earth may be taken two ways, as that expression, "The lower parts of the earth," may be diversely understood. For the " lower parts of the earth," [7] are either the whole earth — that is, those lower parts of the creation — or some part of it. For the word "lower" includes a comparison either with the whole creation, or with some part of itself. In the first sense, Christ's state of humiliation is intended, in which he came down from heaven into these lower parts of God's creation, living on the earth. In the latter, his grave and burial are intended; for the grave is the lowest part of the earth into which mankind descends. And both of these, or his humiliation as it ended in his death and burial, may be respected in these words. What the apostle designs to manifest is that the deep humiliation and the death of Christ are the fountain and origin of the ministry of the church, by way of acquisition and procurement. *It is a fruit whose root is in the grave of Christ*. For in those things — in the humiliation and death of Christ — lay the foundation of his mediatory authority, of which the ministry is an effect, Phi 2.6-11. [8] And it was appointed by him to be the ministry of that peace between God and man which was made in this and by this, Eph 2.14, 16, 17. [9] For when he had made this peace by the blood of the cross, he preached it in giving these gifts to men for its solemn declaration. See 2Cor 5.18-21. [10] Therefore, because the authority from which this gift proceeded was granted to Christ upon his descending into the lower parts of the earth, and the end of the gift is to declare and preach the peace which he made between God and man by doing so, this gift relates to this also. The honor and excellence of the ministry depend on this; and it is to be esteemed and valued with respect to this — namely, its relation to the spiritual humiliation of Christ — and not from the carnal or secular exaltation of those who take it upon themselves.

3. It appears to be an eminent and signal gift from the immediate cause of its actual communication, or from the present qualification of the Lord Christ for bestowing it; and this was his glorious exaltation upon his ascension. A right to this gift was acquired by him in his death; but his actual investiture with all glorious power, was to precede its communication, Eph 4.8, 10. He was first to ascend on high, to triumph over all his and our adversaries, now put under him into absolute and eternal captivity, before he gave out this gift. And he is said here to "ascend far above all heavens," — that is, above these visible and aspectable [11] heavens, which he passed through when he went into the glorious presence of God, or to the right hand of the Majesty on high. See Heb 4.14, [12] with our Exposition on that verse.

It is also added why he was thus gloriously exalted; and this was that he might "fill all things" —not in the essence of his *nature*, but in the exercise of his *power*. He had laid the foundation of his church on himself in his death and resurrection; but now the whole fabric of it was to be filled with its utensils and beautified with its ornaments. He ascended to accomplish this, and he did it principally in conferring this gift of the ministry upon it. This was the first exercise of that glorious power which the Lord Christ was vested with upon his exaltation, the first effect of his wisdom and love, in filling all things to the glory of God and the salvation of his elect. These things are mentioned, so that in the contemplation of their greatness and order, we may learn and judge how excellent this donation of Christ is. And it will also appear from this how contemptible a thing the most pompous ministry in the world is, if it does not proceed from this original.

4. The same is manifest from the nature of the gift itself; for this gift consists in gifts: "He gave gifts," Eph 4.8. There is an active giving

expressed, "He gave;" and also the thing given, that is, "gifts." Thus the ministry is a gift of Christ, not only because it is freely and bountifully given by him to the church, but also because spiritual gifts essentially belong to it — they are indeed its life, and inseparable from its being. A ministry without gifts is no ministry of Christ's giving, nor is it of any other use in the church except to deceive the souls of men. To set up such a ministry, without gifts, is both to despise Christ and to utterly frustrate the ends of the ministry — those for which Christ gave the ministry, and which are expressed here; for —

(1.) Ministerial gifts and graces are the great evidence that the Lord Christ takes care of his church and provides for it, as called into the order and unto the duties of a church. [13] To set up a ministry which may be continued only by outward forms and orders of men, without any communication of gifts from Christ, is to despise his authority and care. Nor is it his mind that any church should continue in order, any longer or otherwise than as he bestows these gifts for the ministry.

(2.) It will be further declared immediately, that these gifts are the only means and instruments by which the work of the ministry may be performed, and by which the ends of the ministry may be attained. The ends of the ministry mentioned here, called its "work," are the "perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come to a perfect man." Of this, nothing at all can be done without these spiritual gifts; and therefore a ministry devoid of them is a mock ministry, and not an ordinance of Christ.

5. The eminency of this gift appears in the variety and diversity of the offices and officers which Christ gave in giving the ministry. He knew there

would be (and had appointed that there should be) a twofold estate of the church, Eph 4.11 [14] —

(1.) Of its first erection and foundation;

(2.) Of its building and edification.

And both different offices and different gifts were necessary for these different states; for —

(1.) Two things were *extraordinary* in the first erection of his church:

[1.] An extraordinary aggression was to be made upon the kingdom of Satan in the world, as upheld by all the potentates of the earth, and the concurrent suffrage [15] of mankind, with the interest of sin and prejudices in them.

[2.] Casting men into a new order, under a new rule and law, for the worship of God; that is, the planting and erecting of churches all over the world.

With respect to these ends, extraordinary officers, with extraordinary authority, power, and abilities, were requisite. It was to this end, therefore, that he "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists;" we have spoken before of the nature of whose offices and their gifts. I will only add here, that it was necessary for these officers to have their immediate call and authority from Christ, antecedent to all order and power in the church — for the very being of the church depended on their power of office. But no man can pretend to this, without such an immediate power from Christ. And what was done originally by their persons, is now done by their word and doctrine; for the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone," Eph 2.20.

(2.) There was a state of the church in its edification, which was to be carried on according to the rules and laws given by Christ in the ordinary administration of all the ordinances and institutions of the gospel. To this end, Christ gives the church ordinary officers, "pastors and teachers," who by his direction were "ordained in every church," Acts 14.23. And these are all the teaching officers that he has given to his church. But if anyone thinks that in enumerating them in this place, as he also did in 1Cor 12.28, our apostle forgot popes and diocesan bishops, with some others — who certainly can only laugh to themselves that they would be admitted in the world as church-officers — he must speak for himself.

Obj. "But the fact is, the other sort of officers were given to the church by Christ, by his immediate call and communication of power to them; it is not apparent how he gives these *ordinary* officers or ministers to it."

I answer that he did it originally, and he continues to do it, by the following ways and means:

(1.) He does it by the law and rule of the gospel, in which he has appointed this office of the ministry in his church; and so it is always to be continued. If there were not such a standing ordinance and institution of his, it would not be in the power of all the churches in the world to appoint any such officers among them, whatever appearance there may be of a need for this. And if any had attempted any such thing, no blessing from God would have accompanied their endeavor; thus they would have set up an idol of their own.

On this we lay the continuance of the ministry in the church. If there is not an ordinance and institution of Christ for this purpose, or even if such an ordinance is granted, the force of it is now expired; and so we must readily confess that the whole office is a mere usurpation. But,

- if he has given "pastors and teachers" to his church, to continue until all his saints in all ages "come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," Eph 4.11-13;
- if he promised to be with them, as such, to the consummation of all things, Mat 28.18-20;
- if the apostles by his authority ordained elders in every church and city, Acts 14.23, Tit 1.5 — and they were made overseers of the flocks by the Holy Ghost, Acts 20.28;
- if they have charge of feeding and overseeing the flock that is among them always, until the chief Shepherd appears, 1Pet 5.1-5;
- if believers, or the disciples of Christ, are obliged by him to always yield obedience to them, Heb 13.7, 17;

with other such plain declarations of the will of the Lord Christ in the constitution and continuance of this office — then this foundation stands as firm and unshaken as the ordinances of heaven, that will not be changed.

There is not the least intimation in the Scripture of any time, state, or condition of the church, in which the disciples of Christ may or ought to live out from under the orderly conduct and guidance of the ministers. Therefore, it is vain to imagine that any defect in other men, any apostasy of the greatest part of any or all visible churches, would incapacitate them from erecting a regular ministry among them and over them. Because the warranty and authority of the ministry depends on this institution of Christ, which is accompanied with a command for its observance (Mat 28.18-20) — and all his disciples being obliged to yield obedience to it, and doing so in the order and manner also approved by him — this is sufficient to constitute a lawful ministry among them. The church of Rome and those adhering to it have, by their apostasy, utterly lost an evangelical ministry

among them. But this is no reason to suppose that others to whom the word of God has come and been effectual for their conversion, do not have sufficient warranty from the word to yield obedience to all the commands of Christ (however much we may be pleased to talk of power and authority, this is all that is left to us in this world). Nor should we suppose that in doing so, Christ will not accept them and approve of what they have done. That is an assertion fit for men to maintain, who have a trade to drive religion to their own especial advantage.

(2.) The Lord Christ gives this office and continues it by giving spiritual gifts and abilities to men, to enable them to discharge the duties and perform the work of that office. This is what I principally design to confirm in its proper place, which will immediately ensue.

All I will say at present is that spiritual gifts of themselves make no man actually a minister; yet no man can be made a minister according to the mind of Christ, who is not partaker of them. Therefore, supposing the continuance of the law and institution mentioned, if the Lord Christ at any time, or in any place, ceases to give out spiritual gifts to men, enabling them in some good measure to discharge the ministry, then and in that place the ministry itself must cease and come to an end. To erect a ministry by virtue of outward order, rites, and ceremonies, without gifts for the edification of the church, is but to hew a block with axes, and smooth it with planes, and set it up as an image to be adored. To make a man a minister who can do nothing of the proper special work of the ministry — nothing towards its only end in the church — is to set up a dead carcass, fasten it to a post, and expect it to do work and service for you.

(3.) He does it by giving power to his church in all ages, to call and separate to the work of the ministry those whom he has fitted and gifted for

it. The things mentioned before are essentially constituent of the ministry; this belongs to the outward order of their entrance into the ministry, who are called by him to it. And concerning this we may observe the following things:

[1.] That this power in the church is not despotic or lordly, but consists in a faculty, right, and ability, to act in this matter obedientially to the command of Christ. Hence all the acting of the church in this matter is nothing but an instituted means of conveying authority and office from Christ to persons who are called to this. The church does not give them any authority of its own or that resides in itself; but only by way of obedience to Christ, does it transmit power from Him to those who are called. Hence they become the ministers of Christ — and not of the bishops, or churches, or men — holding their office and authority from Christ himself, by the law and rule of the gospel. So that whoever despises them, also despises Christ in them. Some would have ministers of the gospel receive all their authority from the people who choose them, and some from the bishops who ordain them; and where *they* have their own authority from, I do not know. But this is to make them ministers of men and servants of men, and to constitute other masters between them and Christ. And because all church power is originally and absolutely vested in Christ, and solely in him, none can partake of the least interest in it or share of it without a communication of that power from him to them. Neither popes, nor prelates, nor the people are able to produce any such grant or concession of power from Christ to his ministers, such that these men have authority residing in them and in their own power, to dispense to others as they see cause — or such that they may withhold it from them as a part or efflux [16] of the power vested in them.

The whole of what is committed to anyone in this kind, is obedience to the law of Christ, and following the guidance of his previous communication of gifts as a means to communicate his power to those who are called to the ministry.

[2.] The church has no power to call any to the office of the ministry, where the Lord Christ has not gone before it in designating him by an endowment with spiritual gifts. For if the whole authority of the ministry is from Christ, and if he never gives it except where he bestows these gifts for its discharge (as in Eph 4.7-8, etc.), then to call anyone to the ministry that Christ has not previously gifted for it, is to set the Spirit aside, and act in our own name and authority. And by reason of these things, the Holy Ghost is said to make men overseers of the flocks who are thus called to it — because both the communication of power in the constitution of the law, and of spiritual gifts by internal effectual operation, are from the Spirit alone, Acts 20.28. [17]

[3.] The outward way and order by which a church may call any person to the office of the ministry among them and over them, is by their joint solemn submission to him in the Lord, as to all the powers and duties of this office, testified by their choice and election of him. It is concerning this outward order that the whole world is filled with disputes about the call of men to the ministry. Yet in truth, it is of the least concern in this: for whatever manner or order is observed in this, if the things mentioned before are not premised to it, then it has no validity or authority. On the other hand, grant that the authority of the ministry depends on the law, ordinance, and institution of Christ — that he calls men to this office by bestowing spiritual gifts on them; and that the actings of the church in this are but an instituted moral means of communicating office-power from Christ himself to

anyone. Let such other things be observed as the light and law of nature requires in cases of a like kind, and the outward mode of the church's acting in this need not be contended about much. It may be proved to be a beam of truth from the light of nature, that no man should be imposed on a church as their minister against their wills or without their express consent, considering that his whole work is to be familiar with their understandings, judgments, wills, and affections. It cannot modestly be denied that this should be done by their choice and election — as the Scripture manifestly declares, Num 8.9-10, Act 1.23, 26; 6.3-6; 14.23. [18] This was observed sacredly for some ages in the primitive churches.

I will not much dispute with anyone about how far any people or church may commit this power of declaring their consent and acquiescence to others to act for them in their stead, as it were, so that the call to office would still be valid, provided the former rules are observed. Though, I approve only of what makes the nearest approaches to the primitive pattern that the circumstances of things are capable of.

[4.] The Lord Christ continues his bestowing of this gift by the solemn ordinance of setting apart those who are called in the manner declared, by "fasting and prayer, and laying on of hands," Acts 13.2, 3, 14.23; 1Tim 4.14. By these means, I say, the Lord Christ continues to declare that he accounts men faithful, and "puts them into the ministry," as the apostle says, 1Tim 1.12.

There are yet various things remaining in the passage of the apostle which we now emphasize, that declare the eminency of this gift of Christ, which may yet be further briefly considered, such as —

6. The end for which it is bestowed; and this is expressed —

(1.) Positively, as to the good and advantage of the church thereby, Eph 4.12;

(2.) Negatively, as to its prohibition and hindrance of evil, verse 14.

(1.) In its end, as positively expressed, three things may be considered:

[1.] That it is "for the equipping of the saints," Eph 4.12 [19] — that is, for the gathering of the saints into complete church-order. The subject-matter of this part of their duty is the saints; that is, by their calling and profession, as are all the disciples of Christ. And what is effected towards them is *katartismos*, [20] their coagmentation, [21] jointing, or compacting into order. So the word *restore* signifies in Gal 6.1. [22] And this effect is declared here, Eph 4.16. [23] It is true, the saints mentioned may come together into some initial church-order by their consent and agreement to walk together in all the ways of Christ, and in obedience to all his institutions, and so become a church in essence, before they have any ordinary pastor or teacher. This is done either by the conduct of extraordinary officers, as at first, or through obedience to the word (thus elders were ordained among those who were in a church-state at that point, Acts 14.23). [24] But they cannot come to that perfection and completeness which is designed for them. What renders a church completely organic, as the proper seat and subject of all gospel worship and ordinances, is this gift of Christ in the ministry.

But it may be asked whether a church — before it comes to this *katartismos* or completeness, before it has any minister in office, or has by any means lost the ministry among them — may not delegate and appoint one or more persons from among themselves to administer all the ordinances of the gospel to them, and by that means make their own perfection? [25]

[2.] The church being so completed, these officers are given to it "for the work of the ministry." This expression is comprehensive, and the particulars included in it are not to be inquired into at this point. It may suffice for our present purpose to consider that it is a *work*, not a *preferment*; and those who intend to give a comfortable account of what is committed to them, will find it a work. It is usually observed that all the words by which the work of the ministry is expressed in the Scripture, denote a particular industrious kind of labor — though some have found that they signify ways of honor and ease. [26] And —

[3.] Both these are directed to one general outcome. It is all "for the edification of the body of Christ." [27] Not to emphasize the metaphors that are in this expression, the excellence of the ministry is declared, in that the object of its duty and work is none other than the body of Christ himself. And its end, is the edification of this body, or its increase in faith and obedience, in all the graces and gifts of the Spirit, until it comes to conformity to him and the enjoyment of him. A ministry which does not have this object and end, is not by the giving or grant of Christ.

(2.) The end of the ministry is expressed *negatively*, or with respect to the evils from which our deliverance is ordained, Eph 4.14. [28]

[1.] The evil which we are hereby delivered from is the danger of being perniciously and destructively deceived by false doctrines, errors, and heresies. These began then, and have ever since continued in all ages, to infest the churches of God. The apostle describes these from — 1*st*. The design of their authors, which is "to deceive;" 2*dly*. Their diligence in that design, "They lie in wait to accomplish it;" 3*dly*. The means they use to compass their end, which are "sleights and cunning craftiness," managed

sometimes with impetuous violence, and thus it is called a "wind of doctrine." And,

[2.] The means of this is our deliverance out of a child-like state, which is accompanied with — 1*st*. Weakness; 2*dly*. Instability; and, 3*dly*. Wilfulness.

Sad is the condition of those churches which have ministers who will themselves toss them up and down by false and pernicious doctrines; or who are not able by sound instructions to deliver them from such a condition of weakness and instability – a condition in which they are not able to preserve themselves from being imposed on in these things by the "cunning sleights of men who lie in wait to deceive." Because this ministry is always to continue in the church, Eph 4.13, [29] it is the great means of influencing the whole body, and every member of it, to a due discharge of their duty, for their edification in love, verses 15, 16.

Designing to address the spiritual gifts bestowed on the ministry of the church, I have thus far diverted to consider the ministry itself, as it is a gift of Christ. I will close with a few corollaries, such as these —

1. Where there is any office erected in the church that is not particularly the gift and institution of Christ, by virtue of that, there is a nullity in the whole office, and in all its administrations.

2. Where the office is appointed, but gifts are not communicated to the person called to it, there is a nullity as to his person, and there is a disorder in the church.

3. It is the duty of the church to look at the ministry as an eminent grant of Christ, with valuation, thankfulness, and improvement.

4. Those who are called to this office in due order, should labor to approve themselves as a gift of Christ; which it is a shameless impudence for some to own who go under that name.

5. They may do this (approve themselves as a gift of Christ) in laboring to be furnished with —

(1.) Gracious qualifications;

(2.) Useful endowments;

(3.) Diligence and laborious travail in this work;

(4.) An exemplary way of life in — [1.] Love; [2.] Meekness; [3.] Self-denial; [4.] Readiness for the cross, etc.

1. **Rom 15:15** Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, [16] that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **Gal 2:9** and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. **Eph 3:8** To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
2. **Jer 3:15** "And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.
3. **Col 2:15** Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.
4. **Act 2:33** "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.
5. לָקַחְתָּ מַתָּנוֹת בָּאָדָם. **Psalm 68:18** You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men [lit. "Adam"], Even *from* the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell *there*.
6. לָקַת [OT:3947] *laqash*.
7. Τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς. *Ta katotera mero tes ges* [NT:2737,3313,1093]
8. **Phi 2:6** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a

bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. [9] Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, [10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, [11] and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

9. **Eph 2:14** For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation… [16] and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. [17] And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

10. **2Cor 5:18** Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, [19] that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. [20] Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. [21] For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

11. *Aspectable*: panoramic – seen from a distance.

12. **Heb 4:14** Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.

13. This is perhaps strangely phrased for the modern world. The sense is calling a meeting to order, so that the business of the meeting may be conducted, and its duties exercised. The church has been called to order by its Head, to conduct its business in the world.

14. **Eph 4:11** And He Himself gave (1) some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and (2) some pastors and teachers;
15. Suffrage has been used throughout this volume, for "testimony." It can also mean a short petition. Neither of those meanings fit here. In modern English, *suffrage* refers to a right to vote; that doesn't fit either. Literally it means the condition of suffering, or of bondage. And that is most likely Owen's meaning here. **Gal 4:3** "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." – WHG
16. *Efflux*: flowing out.
17. **Act 20:28** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
18. **Num 8:9** "And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel. [10] "So you shall bring the Levites before the LORD, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites [***notice "lay their hands on" signifies general approval, and not necessarily the physical act***]; **Act 1:23** And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias… [26] And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. **Act 6:3** "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; [4] "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." [5] And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, [6] whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed,

they laid hands on them. **Act 14:23** So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

19. πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων *pros ton katartismon ton hagion.*

20. καταρτισμὸν [NT:2677] *equipping* or *complete furnishing*.

21. *Coagmentation*: The act of joining, or the state of being joined together; union.

22. καταρτίζετε *katartizete* [NT:2675]

23. **Eph 4:16** from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

24. **Act 14:23** So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

25. Owen answered this question earlier (bottom of , and (3) [3] on).

26. This is a sarcastic comment by Owen, catigating those who treat the ministry as a life of status and personal comfort.

27. εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

28. **Eph 4:14** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting;

29. **Eph 4:13** till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Chapter VII. Of spiritual gifts enabling the ministry

Of spiritual gifts enabling the ministry to exercise and discharge their trust and office.

As declared, the Holy Ghost gives spiritual gifts to the ministry that has been given to the church, enabling them to exercise and discharge the power, trust, and office committed to them. Now, although I am not thoroughly satisfied what men will grant or allow these days (such uncouth and bold principles are continually advanced among us), I suppose it will not be denied by many, not in words at least, that ministers have or ought to have, gifts for the due discharge of their office. To some, indeed, the very name and word "gifts" is a derision, because it is a name and notion unique to the Scripture. Nothing is more contemptible to them than the very mention of "the gifts of the Holy Ghost." At present I will not deal with this directly, though what we will prove will be sufficient for their rebuke, if not for their conviction.

Therefore, our inquiry is this: whether the Spirit of God effectively bestows spiritual gifts on the ministers of the gospel, enabling them to

perform and effect evangelical administrations, according to the power committed to them and duly required of them, to the glory of Christ and the edification of the church. It is moreover inquired, whether the endowment of men with these spiritual gifts, in a degree and measure suited to public edification, is not that which materially constitutes them ministers of the gospel, as being antecedently necessary for their call to their office.

These things, I say, are to be inquired into, because, in opposition to the first, some say that these supposed gifts are nothing but mere *natural* abilities, attained by diligence and improved by exercise, without any special respect to the working of the Holy Ghost —at least not in any other way than what is necessary to attain skill and ability in any human art or science (which is the ordinary blessing of God on man's honest endeavors). And in opposition to the other, some say that a lawful, ordinary, outward call is sufficient to constitute any man a lawful minister, whether he has received any such gifts as those inquired after or not. Therefore, the substance of what we have to declare and confirm is this:

1. That there is a special dispensation and work of the Holy Ghost in providing able ministers of the new testament for the edification of the church, on which depends the continuance of the ministry and the being of the church, as to its outward order. And

2. That in this, the Spirit exerts his power and exercises his authority in the communication of spiritual gifts to men, and without a participation in such gifts, no man has, *de jure*, [1] any lot or portion in this ministration.

In this consists no small part of that work of the Spirit which belongs to his promised dispensation in all ages. To deny this is to renounce all faith in the promise of Christ, all regard for his continued love and care towards the church in the world (or at least the principal pleadable testimony given to

it), and under a pretense of exalting and preserving the church, to totally overthrow it. Now, the evidence which we will give for this truth is contained in the ensuing assertions, with their confirmation [from Scripture]:

First. The Lord Jesus Christ has faithfully promised to be present with his church "to the end of the world." It is his temple and his tabernacle, in which he dwells and walks continually. And this presence of Christ is what makes the church what it is — a congregation essentially distinct from all other societies and assemblies of men. Let men be formed into whatever order you please, according to any outward rules and measures that are either given in the Scripture, or discovered by themselves. Let men derive power and authority by whatever claim they think fit. If Christ is not present with them, they are not a church, nor can all the powers under heaven make them so. And when any church loses the special presence of Christ, it ceases to be a church. I suppose his presence is confessed by those among whom Christ is thus present, or it may be easily proved. See his promises to this purpose: Mat 28.20; Rev 21.3. [2] Those churches which are concerned about other things, but make little inquiry after the evidences of the presence of Christ among them, exceedingly mistake their interest.

Some walk as if they supposed they had him sure enough, immured [3] in their walls as it were, while they keep up the name of a church, and an outward order that pleases and advantages themselves. But outward order, whatever it may be, is so far from being the only evidence of the presence of Christ in a church, that when it is alone, or when it is principally required, it is no evidence at all. And therefore, because preaching the word and the right administration of the sacraments are assigned as the marks of a

true church, if only their outward acts and order are regarded, there is nothing to evidence this purpose in them.

Secondly. This promised presence of Christ is *by his Spirit*. I sufficiently proved this earlier, so that here I will be brief in repeating it, though it is the next foundation of what we have to further offer in this case. We do not speak of the essential presence of Christ with respect to the immensity of his divine nature, by which he is equally present in or equally indistant from all places, manifesting his glory when, where, and how he pleases. Nor does it respect his human nature; for when he promised his presence, he told his disciples that he must leave and depart from them, Joh 16.5-8. Upon saying this, they were filled with sorrow and trouble, until they knew how he would make good the promise of his presence with them, and who or what it was that would supply his bodily absence to their advantage. And he did this in his visible ascension, when "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight," Act 1.9; it was also when they were charged not to expect his return until his coming in judgment, Act 1.11. Accordingly, Peter tells us that "heaven must receive him until the times of restitution of all things," Acts 3.21, when he will appear again "in the glory of his Father," Mat 16.27 — even that glory which the Father gave him upon his exaltation, Phi 2.9-11, joined to "that glory which he had with him before the world was," Joh 17.5. In and upon his departure from them, Christ taught his disciples how they should understand his promise of being present and abiding "with them to the end of the world;" and this was by sending his Holy Spirit in his name, place, and stead, to do all to them and for them which Christ had yet to do with them and for them. See Joh 14.16-18, 26-28, 15.26, 16.7-15. [4]

Christ has no other vicar in the church; nor does he stand in need of any; nor can any mortal man supply that charge and office; nor was it ever thought of in the world until men grew weary of the conduct and rule of the Holy Spirit — by various ways taking his work out of his hand, and leaving him nothing to do in what they called "the church." But I suppose I need not handle this principle as something in dispute or controversy. If I am not greatly mistaken, this presence of Christ in his church by his Spirit is an article of faith to the catholic church, and it such a fundamental truth that whoever denies it, overthrows the whole gospel.

And I have so confirmed it in our former discourses concerning the dispensation and operations of the Holy Ghost, that I do not fear or expect any direct opposition to this. Yet I acknowledge that some begin to talk as if they admitted no other presence of Christ but the word and sacraments. Whatever else remains to be done, lies wholly in ourselves. It is acknowledged that the Lord Christ is present in and by his word and ordinances; but if he is not otherwise present, or is present only by the external administration of these, then no more church-state among men will ensue from that than there is among the Jews, who enjoy the letter of the Old Testament and the institutions of Moses. Except when men rise up in express contradiction to the promises of Christ, and the faith of the catholic church in all ages, we will not contend with them. But —

Thirdly. This presence of the Spirit is secured for the church by an everlasting, unchangeable covenant: Isa 59.21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord; My Spirit that is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, will not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says the Lord, from this time on, and forever." This is God's covenant with

the gospel church, to be erected when "the Redeemer would come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," Isa 59.20. This is a part of the covenant that God has made in Christ the Redeemer. Just as the continuance of the word to the church in all ages is secured by this promise — without which it would cease and come to nothing, seeing that it is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," Eph 2.20 — so the presence of the Spirit in like manner is secured for it. And that is on the same terms as the word; so that if he is not present with the church, all covenant-relation between God and the church ceases. Where this promise does not take place, there is no church, no ordinances, and no acceptable worship, because there is no covenant relation. In brief then, where there is no partaking of the promise of Christ to send the Spirit to abide with us always, there is no interest in that covenant in which God engages that his Spirit will not depart from us forever. And so there is no presence of Christ to make the word and ordinances of worship living, useful, and effectual in their administration, to their proper ends. And thus, there is no church-state, whatever outward order there may be. And on this —

Fourthly. The gospel is called the ministration[5] of the Spirit, and the ministers of the gospel are called the ministers of the Spirit: 2Cor 3.6, "Who has also made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the Spirit;" not of the "ministration of death," but of the "Spirit," which is "glorious," verses 7, 8.

There never was, nor ever will be, any but these two ministrations in the church — that of the letter and death, and that of the Spirit and life. If there is a ministration in any church, it must belong to one of these; and all ministers must be ministers either of the letter, or of the Spirit. If there is a ministry pretended to that is neither of the letter nor of the Spirit, then it is

antichristian. The ministry which was carnal, of the letter and death, was a true ministry; and in its place it was glorious, because it was appointed by God and it was efficacious as to its proper end. The ministry of the gospel is of the Spirit, and it is much more glorious. But if there is a ministration that has the outward form of either, but indeed is neither of them, then it is no ministration at all. And where it is so, there is really no ministration but that of the Bible — that is, God by his providence continuing the Bible among them, makes use of it as he sees good for the conviction and conversion of sinners. In this, there is a secret manifestation of the Spirit also.

We may therefore inquire in what sense the ministration of the gospel is called the "ministry of the Spirit." Now, this cannot be because the laws, institutions, and ordinances of its worship were revealed by the Spirit, for so were all the ordinances and institutions of the Old Testament, as proved before. And yet the ministration of them was the ministration of the letter and of death, in a worldly sanctuary, by carnal ordinances.[2Cor 3.7] Therefore, it must be called the ministry of the Spirit in one of these respects: either —

1. Because it is the special aid and assistance of the Spirit by which any are enabled to administer the gospel and its institutions of worship according to the mind of God, for the edification of the church. In this sense, men are said to be made "able ministers of the new testament," — that is, ministers who are able to administer the gospel in due order. Thus in that expression, "ministers of the Spirit," the "Spirit" denotes the efficient cause of the ministry, the one that quickens it, verse 6. Or —

2. It may be said to be the "ministration of the Spirit," because in and by the ministry of the gospel, the Spirit is in all ages administered and communicated to the disciples of Christ, for all the ends for which the Spirit is promised.

So in Gal 3.2, [6] the Spirit is received by "the teaching of faith." Take it either way, and the whole of what we plead for is confirmed. He alone enables men to discharge the work of the ministry, by the spiritual gifts which he communicates to them; this is the first sense, and it is expressly what we contend for. And if the Spirit is communicated and administered to men in and by the ministration of the gospel in all ages, then he abides with the church forever. As for what ends, we must further inquire.

Fifthly. The great end for which the Spirit is thus promised, administered, and communicated under the gospel, is the continuance and preservation of the church in the world. God has promised to the Lord Christ that his kingdom in this world would endure "throughout all generations," with the course of the sun and moon, Psa 72.5; and "of the increase of his government there would be no end," Isa 9.7; and the Lord Christ himself has declared his preservation of his church, so that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it," Mat 16.18. It may therefore be inquired, On what do the infallible accomplishment of these promises, and countless others to the same end, depend? Or, What is the means by which they will be certainly executed? Now, this must either be some work of God, or of man. If it is of men, and it consists of their wills and obedience, then what is said amounts to this: namely, that once men have received the gospel, and professed subjection to it, they will infallibly abide in it in succession, from one generation to another. But besides that, it must be granted that whatever depends on the wills of men, can have no more certainty than the undetermined wills of men can give security for — which indeed is none at all. So there are confessed instances without number, of such persons and places that have lost the gospel and the profession of it. And what has

happened in one place, may happen in another, and consequently in all places where the reasons and causes of things are the same.

On this supposition, therefore, there is no security that the promises mentioned will be infallibly accomplished. Therefore, the event must depend on some work of God and Christ. Now, this is none other than the dispensation and communication of the Spirit. On this alone, the continuance of the church and of the kingdom of Christ in the world, depend. And because the church falls under a double consideration — namely, of its internal and external form, of its internal spiritual union with Christ, and its outward profession of obedience to him — the calling, gathering, preservation, and edification of the church, in both respects, belong to the Holy Spirit. He does the first, as has been proved at large, by communicating effectual saving grace to the elect. He does the latter by communicating gifts to the guides, rulers, officers, and ministers of the church, with all its members, according to its place and capacity. Suppose that his communication of internal saving grace ceases — then the church must absolutely cease as to its internal form. For we are united to the Lord Christ as our mystical head by the Spirit, the one and self-same Spirit dwelling in him and in those who believe. Union to Christ without saving grace, and saving grace without the Holy Spirit, are strangers to the gospel and to Christian religion; and so is it, to have a church that is holy and catholic, which is not united to Christ as a mystical head. Therefore, the very being of the church, as to its internal form, depends on the Spirit in his dispensation of grace; if you suppose an intercision [7] of this, the church must cease.

It has the same dependence on him as to its outward form and profession, upon his communication of gifts. For "no man can say that Jesus is the

Lord," or profess subjection and obedience to him in a due manner, "but by the Holy Ghost," 1Cor 12.3. Suppose that this work of his ceases; there can be no professing church. Let men mould and cast themselves into whatever order and form they please, and let them pretend that their right and title to their church power and station is derived from their progenitors or predecessors — if they are not furnished with the gifts of the Spirit, to enable their guides for gospel administrations, they are not an orderly gospel church. Therefore —

Sixthly. The communication of such gifts to the ordinary ministry of the church in all ages is plainly asserted in various places of the Scripture, some of which may be briefly considered. The whole nature of this work is declared in the parable of the talents, Matthew 25, verses 14 to 30. The state of the church from the ascension of Christ to his coming again for judgment — that is, in its whole course on the earth — is represented in this parable. In this season, he has servants whom he entrusts in the affairs of his kingdom — in the care of his church, and the propagation of the gospel. So that they may, in their several generations, places, and circumstances, be enabled for this, he gives them talents to trade with, in various distributions, the least of which was sufficient to encourage those who received them, to their use and exercise. The trade they had to drive was that of the administration of the gospel to others — its doctrine, worship, and ordinances. Talents are abilities to trade, which may also comprise opportunities and other advantages; but *abilities* are chiefly intended. These were the gifts of which we speak; nor did it ever enter into the minds of any to think otherwise of them. And they are abilities which Christ, as the king and head of his church, gives to men in a special manner as they are employed under him in the service of his house, and in the work of the

gospel. The servants mentioned are those who are called, appointed, and employed in the service of the house of Christ — that is, all ministers of the gospel, from first to last. And their talents are the gifts which he endows them with for their work, by his own immediate power and authority. And these three things follow from this:

1. That wherever there is a ministry that the Lord Christ sets up, appoints, or owns, he furnishes all those whom he employs in it with gifts and abilities suitable to their work; he does this by the Holy Spirit. He will never fail to own his institutions, with gracious supplies, to render them effectual.

2. That where any have not received talents to trade with, it is the highest presumption in them, and it casts the greatest dishonor on the Lord Christ, for any one to undertake the work of the ministry — as though He requires work where he gives no strength, or trade where he gives no stock. Where the Lord Christ gives no gifts, he has no work to do. He will not require any special duty of anyone, where he does not give a special ability. For any to think they are fit for this work and service in the strength of their own natural parts and endowments, however acquired, is to despise both Christ's authority and his work.

3. For those who have received these talents, either not to trade them at all, or to pretend to manage their trade with another stock — that is, either not to sedulously and duly exercise their ministerial gifts, or to discharge their ministry by other helps and means — is to set up their own wisdom in opposition to Christ's, and to his authority.

In brief, what the whole parable teaches is that wherever there is a ministry in the church that Christ owns or regards, as used and employed by him, persons are furnished with spiritual gifts from Christ by the Spirit,

enabling them to discharge that ministry. And where there are no such spiritual gifts dispensed by him, there is no ministry that he either accepts or approves.

Rom 12.4-8, "Just as we have many members in one body, and all members do not have the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy," etc. It is indifferent, as to our present purpose, whether the apostle is treating offices here, or only duties; the things that ensue, which are plain and obvious in the text, are sufficient to confirm what we plead for:

1. It is the ordinary state of the church that the apostle discourses about: its continuance after being planted; its preservation and edification. Therefore, what he says is necessary to the church in all ages and conditions. To suppose there could be a church devoid of the gifts mentioned here, is to overthrow the whole nature and end of a gospel church.

2. That the principle of all administrations in the church-state described, is gifts that are received from Jesus Christ by his Spirit. For, declaring the way by which the church may be edified, he lays the foundation of it in this: that "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Eph 4.7 For the apostle exhorts those to whom he speaks, to attend to those duties by which the church may be edified; and that is by virtue of the gifts which they had received. The whole duty of anyone in the church lies in this: that he acts according to the *charisma* that he is made a partaker of. It has already been fully declared what these *charismata* are, and by whom they are bestowed [see p. 423].

3. That these gifts give not only the ability for duty, but the rule and measure for all works of service that are to be performed in the church. Everyone is to act in this according to his gift, and not otherwise. To say that this state of the church has now ceased, and that another state has been introduced in which all gospel administrations may be managed *without* spiritual gifts, or not by virtue of those gifts, is to say what *in fact* is true in most places. But whether the true nature of the church is not overthrown by this, is left for consideration. 1Pet 4.10-11, [8] is a parallel testimony to this; and many others to the same purpose might be pleaded, together with that which is the foundation of this whole discourse, Eph 4.7-16, etc. Only, let it be remembered that, in this whole discourse, I understand "gifts" to mean *charismata pneumatika*, those spiritual largesses, [9] which are neither absolutely natural endowments, nor attainable by our own industry and diligence.

Seventhly. These gifts, as they are bestowed to that end, so they are indispensably necessary to gospel administrations. For, as we have proved, they are spiritual, and not legal or carnal. And spiritual administrations cannot be exercised in a due manner without spiritual gifts. Indeed, one reason why they are spiritual, and are so called, is because they cannot be performed without the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit in and by these gifts of his. If the Lord Christ had appointed administrations of another nature, which were in every way suited to the reason of men, and to be exercised by the powers of reason, then there would have been no need for these spiritual gifts. For the spirit of a man knows the things of a man, and it will both guide and act him.[Pro 20.27] But because these administrations are spiritual in their nature, use, meaning, and efficacy, it is by spiritual gifts

alone that they may be managed. Hence these things live and die together: where the one is not present, neither will the other be.

Thus, when many — perhaps *most* who were outwardly called to office in the church — began to be carnal in their hearts and lives, and to neglect the use of these gifts, not applying themselves to attaining them, nor endeavoring to excite or increase what they had received by diligence or constant exercise, refusing to trade with the talent committed to them, they quickly began to grow weary of spiritual administrations, On doing this, in compliance with many corrupt affections, they resorted to an outward, carnal, ceremonious worship and administration of ordinances, which they might discharge and perform without the least aid or assistance of the Holy Ghost, nor supply of spiritual gifts. So, in the neglect of these gifts, and the loss of them which ensued, lay the beginning of the apostasy of the Christian church as to its outward profession. This was quickly completed by the neglect of the grace of the Spirit, by which the church lost both truth and holiness.

Nor could it be otherwise. For, as we proved, the outward form and being of the church, as to its visible profession, depend on the reception and use of these gifts. Upon their decay, therefore, the church must decay as to its profession — and in their loss, is its ruin. We have an instance in the church of Rome, as to what various, extravagant, and endless inventions the minds of men will put them to, in order to keep up a show of worship. But by the loss of spiritual gifts, spiritual administrations are also lost. This is what their innumerable forms, modes, sets of rites and ceremonies, and seasons of worship, are invented to supply. But these are to no purpose at all; they only aggravate their sin and folly.

Eighthly. In the last place, we plead the event [10] [of gifts], even in the days in which we live. For the Holy Ghost continues to dispense spiritual gifts for gospel administrations in great variety to those ministers of the gospel who are called to their office according to his mind and will. The opposition made to this by profane scoffers, is not to be valued. The experience of those who are humble and wise is appealed to — those who, fearing God, inquire into these things. Do they not have an experience of this administration? Do they not find the presence of the Spirit himself — by his various gifts in them, by whom spiritual things are administered to them? Do they not have a proof of Christ speaking in them by the assistance of his Spirit, making the word mighty to all its proper ends? And as with the thing itself, so the variety of his dispensations also manifest themselves to the experience of believers. Who does not see how different the gifts of men are, the Holy Ghost distributing to every one as he will? And the experience of those who have received these gifts may also be pleaded, of the special assistance they receive in exercising them. Indeed, the profaneness of a contrary apprehension is intolerable among those who profess to be Christians. For any to boast that they are sufficient of themselves for the stewardly dispensation of the mysteries of the gospel — by their own endowments, whether natural or acquired, and by the exercise of those, without partaking of any special spiritual gift from the Holy Ghost — is a presumption which contains in it a renunciation of all or any interest in the promises of Christ. Those promises are made to the church for the continuance of His presence in it. Let men be however well persuaded of their own abilities — let them pride themselves in their performances, in the reflection of applause from persons who are unacquainted with the mystery of these things; let them frame for themselves such a work of the ministry

that its discharge stands in little or no need of these gifts — and it will at length appear that, where the gifts of the Holy Ghost are excluded from their administration, the Lord Christ is excluded, and the Spirit himself is excluded, and all true edification of the church is excluded, and so are all the real concerns of the gospel.

And so we have, I hope, confirmed the second part of the work of the Holy Ghost with respect to spiritual gifts — namely, his continuing to distribute and communicate them to the church to the end of the world, according to the powers and duties which he has erected in it or required of it.

1. *De jure*: by right or by law; legally or judicially.
2. **Mat 28:20** "… and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." **Rev 21:3** And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.
3. *Immured*: confined or enclosed.
4. **Joh 14:16** "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- [17] "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. [18] "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. **Joh 14:26** "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. [27] "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. [28] "You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. **Joh 15:26** "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. **Joh 16:7** "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. [8] "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: [9] "of sin, because they do not believe in Me; [10] "of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; [11] "of

judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. [12] "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. [13] "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. [14] "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. [15] "All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

5. *Ministration*: assistance. Ministry, by comparison, is the work itself. Owen uses them interchangeably here.

6. **Gal 3:2** This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

7. *Intercision*: a cutting off or interruption; termination.

8. **1Pet 4:10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. [11] If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

9. *Largess*: Liberality in bestowing gifts; extremely liberal and generous of spirit.

10. *Event*: a circumstance; here it means the actual fact or experience of gifts – their presence in true churches.

Chapter VIII. Of the gifts of the Spirit with respect to doctrine, worship, and rule.

Of the gifts of the Spirit with respect to doctrine, worship, and rule — how they are attained and improved.

There still remain two things to be spoken to with respect to the gifts which the Holy Ghost bestows on the ministers of the gospel, to qualify them for their office, and to enable them for their work. And these are — I. What those gifts are; and II. How they are to be attained and improved. [1]

I. In our inquiry about the first — or what the gifts are by which men are fitted and enabled for the ministry — we wholly set aside the consideration of all those gracious qualifications of faith, love, zeal, compassion, careful tender watchfulness, and the like, on which the holy use of their ministry depends. For our inquiry is only about those gifts on which the very being of the ministry depends. There may be a true ministry in some cases where there is no sanctifying grace; but where there are no spiritual gifts, there is no ministry at all. In general, gifts are abilities for duly managing the spiritual administrations of the gospel, in its doctrine, worship, and discipline, for the edification of the church. It is not easy, indeed, it may be

that it is not possible for us, to enumerate in particular all the various gifts which the Holy Ghost endows the ministers of the gospel with. But because all the concerns of the church may be referred to *these three heads* — doctrine, worship, and rule — we may inquire, What are the principal spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost with respect to those distinctly?

First. The first great duty of the ministry, with reference to the church, is the dispensation of the doctrine of the gospel to it, for its edification. Just as it is the duty of the church to continually attend to this, Act 2.42, so it is also the principal work of the ministry. This is the foundation of all other duties, which the apostles themselves gave themselves to in a special manner, Act 6.4. Hence it is given as the charge of all ministers of the gospel, Acts 20.28; 1Pet 5.2; 1Tim 1.3, 4.13, 16, 17; 2Tim 4.1-3. [2] For this is the principal means appointed by Christ for the edification of his church, and that by which spiritual life is begotten and preserved.

Where this work is neglected or carelessly attended to, the whole work of the ministry is despised. And with respect to this ministerial duty, there are three spiritual gifts that the Holy Ghost endows men with, which must be considered:

1. The first is wisdom, or knowledge, or understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, the revelation of the mystery of God in Christ, with his mind and will towards us in this. These things may be distinguished, and they seem to be so in the Scripture sometimes. I put them together, as all of them denote that acquaintance with and comprehension of the doctrine of the gospel which is indispensably necessary for those who are called to preach it to the church. Some imagine this is an easy matter to be attained; or at least, that there is no more required for this, nor is the use of any other means needed, than what is necessary to acquire skill in any other art or

science. And it would be well if some who are otherwise concerned in point of duty, would only lay out as much of their strength and time in obtaining *this* knowledge, as they do about other things which will not turn much to their account. But instead, the cursory perusal of a few books is thought sufficient to make any man wise enough to be a minister. And not a few undertake ordinarily to be teachers of others, who would scarcely be admitted as tolerable disciples in a well-ordered church. But more belongs to this wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, than most men are aware of. If the nature of it were duly considered, and along with that, the necessity of it to the ministry of the gospel, then probably some would not so rush into that work as they do, when they have not been provided the ability to perform it. In brief, there is,

- such a comprehension of the scope and end of the Scripture, of the revelation of God in this;
- such an acquaintance with the systems of particular doctrinal truths, in their rise, tendency, and use;
- such a habit of mind in judging spiritual things, and comparing them with one another;
- such a distinct insight into the springs and course of the mystery of the love, grace, and will of God in Christ

— that it enables those who have this, to declare the counsel of God, to make known to others the way of life, of faith and obedience, and to instruct them in their whole duty to God and man in these things. The apostle calls this his "knowledge in the mystery of Christ," which he manifested in his writings, Eph 3.4. The gospel is the "wisdom of God in a mystery," 1Cor 2.7. Because the dispensation and declaration of this wisdom is committed to the ministers of the church, their principal duty is

to become so wise and understanding in that mystery, that they may be able to declare it to others. And without this, they have no ministry committed to them by Jesus Christ. See Eph 1.8-9, 3.3-6, 18-19; Col 4.3. [3]

The sole inquiry is this: from where may we gain this wisdom, seeing that it is abundantly evident that we do not have it of ourselves. The Scripture declares everywhere that, in general, it is from God, and it is to be asked of him. See Col 1.9, 2.1-2; 2Tim 2.7; Jas 1.5, 1Joh 5.20. [4] In particular, it is plainly affirmed that it is the special gift of the Holy Ghost: He gives the "word of wisdom," 1Cor 12.8 (this passage has been examined before). And wisdom is the first ministerial gift that he bestows on anyone. To look for a ministry where this gift is not found in some measure, is to look for the living among the dead. Those who undertake to be preachers of the gospel on any other grounds, will deceive their own souls in the end, just as they deceive the souls of others in the meantime. But I will not divert here to the full description of this spiritual gift, because I have discussed it elsewhere.

2. With respect to the doctrine of the gospel, the ministry of the church requires skill to divide the word rightly; which is also a special gift of the Holy Ghost: 2Tim 2.15, "Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Both the former clauses depend on the latter. If a minister would be accepted with God in his work, if he would be found at the last day "a workman who does not need to be ashamed," — that is, if he would be such a builder of the house of God that is work is fit, proper, and useful — he must take care to "divide the word of truth," which is committed to his dispensation "rightly," or in a due manner. Ministers are stewards in the house of God, and dispensers of the mysteries of this house. And therefore it is required of them that they give all the servants that are in the house, or

belong to it, a fit portion, according to their wants, occasions, and services, suitable to the will and wisdom of their Lord and Master: Luk 12.42, 43, "Who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?" Giving provision and a portion of food to the household of Christ, consists principally in the right dividing and distribution of the word of truth. It is taking from those great stores of it in the Scripture and, as it were, cutting off a portion suitable to the various conditions of those in the family. In this consists the principal skill of a scribe who is furnished for the kingdom of heaven with the wisdom described before. And without this, a common course of dispensing or preaching the word, without distinguishing persons and truths, however it may be gilded over with a flourish of words and oratory, is shameful work in the house of God.

Now, various things are required for this skill:

(1.) Sound judgment in general concerning the state and condition of those to whom anyone is so dispensing the word. It is the duty of a shepherd to know the state of his flock; and unless he does, he will never feed them profitably. He must know whether they are babes, or young men, or old; whether they need milk or strong meat; whether they are skilful or unskilful in the word of righteousness; whether they have their senses exercised to discern good and evil or not; or whether his hearers are mixed with all these sorts — whether, in the judgment of charity, they are converted to God, or are still in an unregenerate condition; — what their principal temptations probably are, their hindrances and furtherances; and what is their growth or decay in religion. Somone who is not able to make a competent judgment concerning these things, and the other circumstances

of the flock, so as to be steered by this in his work, will never evidence himself to be "a workman who does not need to be ashamed."

(2.) An acquaintance with the ways and methods of the work of God's grace on the minds and hearts of men, so that he may pursue and comply with its design in the ministry of the word. Nothing is more despised by many than an understanding of this; yet, nothing is more necessary to the work of the ministry. The word of the gospel as preached is a vehicle of grace, [5] and it ought to be ordered so that it may comply with its design in its whole work on the souls of men. Therefore, the one who is unacquainted with the ordinary methods of the operation of grace, fights uncertainly in his preaching of the word, like a man beating the air.[1Cor 9.26] It is true, God can and often does direct a word of truth, spoken randomly as it were at, to have its proper effect of grace on some one or other. Thus it was when the man drew a bow by chance, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.[1Kng 22.34] But ordinarily, a man who does not know how to take aim, is not likely to hit a joint.

(3.) An acquaintance with the nature of temptation, with the special hindrances of faith and obedience which may befall those to whom the word is dispensed, is likewise required for this. Many things might be added under this head, seeing that a principal part of ministerial skill consists in this.

(4.) A right understanding of the nature of spiritual diseases, distempers, and sicknesses, with their proper cures and remedies, also belongs to this. For lack of this, the hearts of the wicked are often made glad in the preaching of the word, and those of the righteous are filled with sorrow; the hands of sinners are strengthened, and those who are looking to God are discouraged or turned away. And where men either do not know these

things, or they do not or cannot apply themselves skilfully to distribute the word according to various occasions, they cannot give the household its portion of food in due season.

The one who lacks this spiritual gift will never divide the word rightly, to its proper ends, 2Tim 3.16-17. [6] It is lamentable to consider what shameful work is made for lack of this in the preaching of some men — indeed, how the whole gift is lost, as to its power, use, and benefit.

3. The gift of utterance also belongs to this part of the ministerial duty in the dispensation of the doctrine of the gospel. This is particularly reckoned by the apostle among the gifts of the Spirit, 1Cor 1.5; 2Cor 8.7. And he desires the prayers of the church that the gift may abide with himself, and abound in him, Eph 6.19. [7] And there he declares that the nature of it consists in "opening the mouth boldly, to make known the mysteries of the gospel;" also Col 4.3. [8] Now, this utterance does not consist in a natural volubility of speech, [9] which taken by itself, is so far from being a gift of the Spirit, or a thing to be earnestly prayed for, that it is usually a snare to those who have it, and trouble for those who hear them. Nor does it consist in a rhetorical ability to adorn discussions with a flourish of words, however plausible or enticing they may be. Much less is it a bold corrupting of the ordinance of preaching, with a foolish affectation of words — supposedly elegant speech, quaint expressions, and similar effects of wit — this is but fancy and vanity. But four things concur in this gift of utterance:

(1.) *Parrhesia*, [10] or "dicendi libertas." The word we translate "utterance" is *logos*, that is, speech. It is evident from the places mentioned, and their application, that what is intended is not speech in general, but a certain *kind* of speech. And it is such a speech that elsewhere is called *parrhesia* — that is, a freedom and liberty in the declaration of the truth conceived. A man

has this when he is not restrained by any internal defect, or any outward consideration, in the declaration of those things which he ought to speak. This is the frame and ability that the apostle expresses in himself: 2Cor 6.11, "O you Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged." A free, enlarged spirit, attended with an ability of speech suited to the matter in hand, with its occasions, belong to this gift.

(2.) Boldness and holy confidence. This is how we often render *parrhesia*, which this utterance greatly consists in. When the Spirit of God, in the midst of difficulties, oppositions, and discouragements, strengthens the minds of ministers so they are not terrified by any amazement, but discharge their work freely, considering whose word and message it is that they deliver, *that* is what belongs to this gift of utterance.

(3.) Gravity in expression in their delivery, becoming the sacred majesty of Christ and his truths. One who speaks is to "speak as the oracles of God," 1Pet 4.11 — that is, not only as to truth, preaching the word of God and nothing else, but doing it with that gravity and soundness of speech which become those who speak the oracles of God.

For just as we are to deliver "sound doctrine" and nothing else, Tit 1.9, so we are to use "sound speech, that cannot be condemned," Tit 2.7-8.

(4.) To this gift also belongs the authority which accompanies the delivery of the word when it is preached in demonstration of these spiritual abilities.

All these things are necessary, so that the hearers may receive the word, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God." 1Thes 2.13

These are the principal spiritual gifts with which the Holy Ghost endows the ministers of the church, with respect to the effectual dispensation of the word or the doctrine of the gospel which is committed to them. And where these gifts are communicated in any degree necessary to the due discharge

of that office, they will evidence themselves to the consciences of those who believe. The dispensation of the word by virtue of these gifts greatly varies, from the various degrees in which they are communicated, and the different natural abilities of those who receive them. Yet it will be sufficiently distinguished and remote from that empty, wordy, sapless way of discussing spiritual things, which is the mere effect of the wit, fancy, invention, and projection of men who are destitute of the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the mysteries of the gospel.

Secondly. The worship of God is the second head of duties belonging to the ministerial office. By the worship of God, I mean only that especial part of it, of which God himself is its immediate object. For, absolutely, preaching and hearing the word is a part of sacred worship. It is that part in which we act the obedience of faith to the commands of God, and submit ourselves to his institutions. And, indeed, for those who hear, God declaring himself by his word is the immediate object of their worship. But the dispensation of the word which we have considered, is the acting of men, upon the authority and command of God, towards others. But, as was said, what is to be inquired into, is that alone of which God himself is the immediate object. Such are all the remaining offices and duties of the church, except those which belong to its *rule*. And this worship has various acts, according to the variety of Christ's institutions and the church's occasions. Yet, as to the manner of its performance, it is comprised in *prayer*. For by "prayer," we mean all the confessions, supplications, thanksgivings, and praises, that are made to God in the church, whether absolutely or in the administration of other ordinances, such as the sacraments. Therefore, as the glory of God is greatly concerned in this duty, and as it comprehends all the sacred offices of public worship, prayer is the

principal act of obedience in the church. As to its performance, then, this depends either on the natural abilities of men, or on the aids and operation of the Holy Ghost.

By the natural abilities of men, I mean not only what they are able to perform of themselves in every instance, but also whatever assistance they may make use of, either of their own discovery or others'. And by the aids of the Holy Ghost, I mean a special spiritual gift bestowed on men for this purpose. Now, to suppose that the whole duty of the church in this should consist in the actings of men in their own strength and power, without any special assistance of the Holy Spirit, is to exclude the consideration of him from those things with respect to which he is principally promised by our Lord Jesus Christ. But what concerns this gift of the Holy Ghost has been handled at large by itself already, and it must not be insisted on here again. Taking for granted that what is in this was sufficiently confirmed, I will only add that those who have not received this gift are utterly unfit to undertake the office of the ministry. And in this office it is their duty to go before the church in the administration of all ordinances, by virtue of these abilities. In civil or secular things, it would be esteemed an intolerable solecism [11] to call and choose a man to discharge an office or duty whose execution depended solely on such a particular faculty or skill, which he has no interest in or acquaintance with. It will be apparent one day that this is also true in sacred and religious things — indeed, much more.

Thirdly. The rule of the church belongs to its ministers. God has established rule in the church, Rom 12.8; 1Cor 12.28; 1Tim 5.17; 1Thes 5.12; Heb 13.7, 17. [12] I will not dispute now what sort of ministry this is, nor whether the rule belongs to one sort alone. It is enough for my present design that it is committed by Christ to the ministers of the church, which

are its guides, rulers, and overseers. Nor will I at present inquire into the particular powers, acts, and duties of this rule; I have done that elsewhere. For now I am only considering it so far as its exercise requires a special ministerial gift to be communicated by the Holy Ghost. And in order for this, the ensuing things must be premised:

1. That this rule is *spiritual*, and has nothing in common with the administration of the powers of the world. It has, I say, no agreement with secular power and its exercise, unless it is in some natural circumstances that inseparably attend rulers and the ruled in any kind. It belongs to the kingdom of Christ and the administration of it, which are "not of this world." Joh 18.36 And this is well pleaded by some against those who would erect a kingdom for him in the world, and as far as I can understand, *of* this world, framed in their own imaginations for a fancied interest of their own. And it is as pleadable against those who pretend to exercise the rule and power of his present kingdom in the manner of the potestative [13] administrations of the world.

Our Savior forbade his disciples to rule at all in the manner of the Gentiles, who then possessed all sovereign power in the world. He told them that it should not be so with them — that some would be great and exercise dominion over others, but that *they* should serve one another in love, with the greatest condescension to service being required of those who are otherwise most eminent. [14] When he said this, he did not intend to take from them or divest them of that spiritual power and authority in the government of the church which he intended to commit to them. His design, therefore, was to declare what that authority was not, and how it should not be exercised. It was not to be a lordly or despotic power; nor was it to be exercised by penal laws, courts, and coercive jurisdiction, which was the

way the Gentiles administered all power. If that kind of power and rule in the church, which is for the most part exercised in the world, is not forbidden by our Savior, then no man living can tell what *is* forbidden. For as to meekness, moderation, patience, equity, righteousness — these were more easily found in the legal administrations of power among the Gentiles, than in those used in many churches. But such a rule was signified to the apostles, that its authority, and what it proceeds from, was spiritual. Its object is the minds and souls of men only. And the way of its administration was to consist in a humble, holy, spiritual application of the word of God or rules of the gospel to them.

2. The end of this rule is merely and solely the edification of the church. All the power that the apostles themselves had, either in or over the church, was only for their edification, 2Cor 10.8.[15] And the edification of the church consists in the increase of faith and obedience in all its members; in subduing and mortifying sin; in fruitfulness in good works; in the confirmation and consolation of those who stand; in raising up those who have fallen, and the recovery of those who wander; in the growth and flourishing of mutual love and peace. Whatever rule is exercised in the church for any other end, is foreign to the gospel, and it tends only to the destruction of the church itself.

3. In the way and manner of the administration of this rule and government, two things may be considered:

(1.) What is *internal*, in the qualifications of the minds of those by whom it is to be exercised: such as wisdom, diligence, love, meekness, patience, and similar evangelical endowments.

(2.) What is *external*, or what the outward rule of it is; and this is the word and law of Christ alone, as we have declared elsewhere.

From these things it may appear what the nature is, in general, of that skill in the rule of the church which we assert to be a special gift of the Holy Ghost. If it were only an ability or skill in the canon or civil law, or rules of men; if it was only an acquaintance with the nature and course of some courts, proceeding litigiously, by citations, processes, and legal pleadings, issuing in pecuniary mulcts, [16] outward coercions, or imprisonments — then I would willingly acknowledge that there is no special gift of the Spirit of God required for this.

But its nature being what we declared, it is impossible for it to be exercised rightly without special assistance of the Holy Ghost. Is any man sufficient of himself for these things? 2Cor 2.16 Will any man undertake, of himself, to know the mind of Christ in all the occasions of the church, and to administer the power of Christ in them and about them? Therefore, the apostle teaches in many places, that wisdom, skill, and understanding are a special gift of the Holy Ghost, to administer the authority of Christ in the church for its edification, with faithfulness and diligence, Rom 12.6, 8; [17] 1Cor 12.28. It is the Holy Ghost who makes the elders of the church its bishops or overseers, by calling them to their office, Acts 20.28; and whatever he calls any man to, he furnishes him with abilities for its discharge.

And so have we given a brief account of those *ordinary* gifts which the Holy Ghost communicates for the constant ministry of the church. And he will do so to the consummation of all things, having manifested in our passage, moreover, the dependence of the ministry on this work of his. So that we need no additional pains to demonstrate that where he does not go before in the communication of these gifts, no outward order, call, or constitution is sufficient to make anyone a minister of the gospel.

There are gifts which respect duties only.[18] Such are those which the Holy Ghost continues to communicate to all the members of the church in a great variety of degrees, according to the places and conditions which they are in, for their own and the church's edification. There is no need to insist on them in particular, seeing that they are of the same nature as those which are continued for the ministers of the church — those who are required to excel in them, so as to be able to go before the whole church in their exercise. The Spirit of the gospel was promised by Christ to all his disciples, to all believers, to the whole church, and not only to its guides. To them, the Spirit is promised in a special manner, with respect to their office, power, and duty, but not absolutely or only. As he is the Spirit of grace, he quickens, animates, and unites the whole body of the church, and all its members, in and to Christ Jesus, 1Cor 12.12-13.[19] And as he is the administrator of all supernatural gifts, he furnishes the whole body and all its members with spiritual abilities for its edification.[20] And ordinarily, without them in some measure or degree, we are not able to discharge our duty to the glory of God; for —

1. These gifts are a great means and help to excite and exercise grace itself, without which it will be lifeless and apt to decay. Men grow in grace by the due exercise of their own gifts in duties. Therefore, every individual person on his own account stands in need of them with respect to the exercise and improvement of grace, Zec 12.10.[21]

2. Most men have, it may be, such duties incumbent on them with respect to others, that they cannot rightly discharge them without the special aid of the Spirit of God in this kind. So it is with all those who have families to take care of and provide for; for ordinarily they are bound to instruct their children and servants in the knowledge of the Lord, and to go before them

in that worship which God requires of them, as Abraham did, the "father of the faithful." And some spiritual abilities are requisite to this; for none can teach others more than they know themselves, nor can they perform spiritual worship without some spiritual gifts, unless they resort to those shifts [22] which we rejected on good grounds before.

3. Every member of a church, in order and according to the mind of Christ, possesses some place, use, and office in the body, which cannot be filled for the benefit and ornament of the whole, without some spiritual gift. These places are various; some are of greater use than others, and of more necessity for the edification of the church; but *all* are useful in their kind. Our apostle argues for this at large in1Cor 12.12-20. All believers in due order become one body, by the participation of the same Spirit, and by union to the same Head. Those who do not partake of the one Spirit, who are not united to the Head, do not properly belong to the body, whatever place they seem to hold in it. Of those who do so, some are (as it were) an eye, some a hand, and some a foot. All of these are useful in their several places, and needed for one another. None of them is so highly exalted as to have the least occasion for being exalted, as though he had no need of the rest; for the Spirit distributes to every one severally as he will — not all are distributed to any one, except the Head, our Lord Jesus, from whom we all receive grace according to the measure of his gift. Nor is any so low or useless as to say it is not of the body, or that the body has no need of it. But every one in his place and station concurs to the unity, strength, beauty, and growth of the body. Our apostle argues at large for these things, in the place mentioned.

4. Hereby supplies are communicated to the whole from the Head, Eph 4.15-16; Col 2.19. [23] It is the body, that is, the church under the conduct of

its officers, that the apostle discusses in those places. And it is the duty of the whole to "speak the truth in love," every one in his distinct place and station.

And in this, God has so ordered the union of the whole church in itself, to and in dependence on its Head, that through and by not only the "supply of every joint" (which may express either the officers or its more eminent members), but also the "effectual working of every part" in the exercise of the graces and gifts which the Spirit imparts to the whole, the body may "edify itself" and be increased. Therefore —

5. The Scripture is express that the Holy Ghost communicates those gifts to private believers, and directs them in that duty in which they are to be exercised. 1Pet 4.10, [24] "Every man," that is, every believer, walking in the order and fellowship of the gospel, is to attend to the discharge of his duty, according to the spiritual ability he has received. So it was in the church of Corinth, 1Cor 1.5-7, [25] and in the church of Rome, Rom 15.14. [26] And all of them knew it was their duty to "covet the best gifts," 1Cor 12.31, which they did with success. And on this depend the commands for the exercise of those duties which they were to perform in the ability of these gifts they received. So they were all to "admonish one another," Rom 15.14 to "exhort one another," Heb 3.13 to "build up one another in their most holy faith." Jud 1.20 And it is the loss of those spiritual gifts which has introduced among many an utter neglect of these duties, so that they are scarcely heard of among most of those who are called Christians. But blessed be God, we have a large and full experience of the continuance of this dispensation of the Spirit, in the eminent abilities of a multitude of private Christians, however those gifts may be despised by those who do not know them! I confess, they have been abused by some. Some have presumed on them

beyond the line and measure which they have received; some have been puffed up with them; some have used them in a disorderly way in churches and to their hurt; some have boasted of what they have not received — all of these miscarriages also befell the primitive churches. And I would rather have the order, rule, spirit, and practice of those churches that were planted by the apostles, with all their troubles and disadvantages, than the carnal peace of others in their open degeneracy from all those things.

II. It remains only that we inquire how men may come to or attain a participation in these gifts, whether it is ministerial or more private. And to this end we may observe —

1. That they are not communicated to anyone by a sudden afflatus[27] or extraordinary infusion, as were the gifts of miracles and tongues, which were bestowed on the apostles and many of the first converts. That dispensation of the Spirit has long since ceased. And where it is now pretended to by anyone, it may justly be suspected as an enthusiastic delusion. For just as the purpose of those gifts has ceased — which in their own nature, exceeded the whole power of all our faculties — so their communication and the manner of it has also ceased.

Yet I must say *this*: that the infusion of spiritual light into the mind, which is the foundation of all gifts (as it was proved), sometimes being worked suddenly or in a short time, the concomitance of gifts in some good measure is likewise often sudden. And it has the appearance of being something extraordinary, as might be shown in instances of several sorts.

2. These gifts are not absolutely attainable by our own diligence and endeavors in the use of means, without respect to the sovereign will and pleasure of the Holy Ghost. Suppose there are such means to attain and improve them, and that several persons with the same measures of natural

abilities and diligence use those means for that end. It still will not follow that all must equally partake of them. They are not the immediate product of our own endeavors, nor under an ordinary blessing on them. For they are *charismata*, [28] arbitrary largesses or gifts, which the Holy Spirit works in all persons severally as he will. Hence we see different outcomes among those who are exercised in the same studies and endeavors: some are endowed with eminent gifts, some scarcely attain any that are useful, and some despise them, both name and thing. Therefore, there is an immediate operation of the Spirit of God in the bestowal of these spiritual abilities, which cannot be accounted for by the measures of a person's natural parts and industry.

And yet I say that,

3. Ordinarily they are attained and also increased by the due use of means suited to this, as grace is also, which none but Pelagians would affirm is absolutely in the power of our own wills; and naming these means will put a close to this discourse.

Among them is required, in the *first* place, a due preparation of the soul by humility, meekness, and teachableness. The Holy Spirit takes no delight in imparting his special gifts to proud, self-conceited men, nor to men vainly puffed up in their own fleshly minds. The same must be said concerning other vicious and depraved *habits* of mind by which, moreover, gifts are often expelled and cast out after they have been received in some measure. And in this case, I need not mention those by whom all these gifts are despised — it would be a wonder indeed if they were to be made partakers of them, or at least if these gifts were to abide with them.

Secondly. Prayer is a principal means for their attainment. The apostle directs us to this when he enjoins us to earnestly desire the best gifts;[1Cor

12.31 for this desire is to be acted on by prayer, and not otherwise.

Thirdly. Diligence in the things about which these gifts are concerned. What I mean here, is study and meditation on the word of God, with the due use of means, to attain a right understanding of God's mind and will in this. For it is in this course, for the most part, conscientiously attended to, that the Holy Spirit comes in and joins his aid and assistance for furnishing the mind with those spiritual endowments.

Fourthly. The growth, increase, and improvement of these gifts depend on their faithful use as our duty requires. It is practice alone that increases *talents*, and exercise in a way of duty that improves *gifts*. Without this, they will first wither, and then perish. And by neglecting this, they are lost every day — in some it is partially, in some totally, and in some to the point of contempt, hatred, and blaspheming of what they themselves had received.

Lastly. Men's natural endowments, with elocution, memory, judgment, and the like — improved by reading, learning, and diligent study — will enlarge, set off, and adorn these gifts where they are received.

1. This second part begins on .
2. **Act 20:28** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **1Pet 5:2** Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; **1Tim 1:3** As I urged you when I went into Macedonia-- remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine; **1Tim 4:13** Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine… [16] Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. **2Tim 4:1** I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: [2] Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;
3. **Eph 1:8** which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, [9] having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself; **Eph 3:3** how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, [4] by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), [5] which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: [6] that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body,

and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel; **Eph 3:18** that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height – [19] to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. **Col 4:3** meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

4. **Col 1:9** For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **Col 2:1** 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, [2] that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ; **2Tim 2:7** Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. **Jas 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. **1Joh 5:20** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true;.

5. vehiculum gratiæ.

6. **2Tim 3:16** All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

7. **1Cor 1:5** that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance [*logos* NT:3056] and all knowledge; **2Cor 8:7** But as you abound in everything-- in faith, in speech [*logos*], in knowledge, in all diligence, and

in your love for us-- *see* that you abound in this grace also. **Eph 6:19** and for me, that utterance [*logos*] may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly [*parrhesia* NT:3954] to make known the mystery of the gospel;

8. **Col 4:3** meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak [*laleo* NT:2980] the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains;

9. *Volubility*: fluency, where words come effortlessly.

10. παῤῥησία *parrhesia* [NT:3954] – *boldness; uninhibited in speech or action*.

11. *Solecism*: a *faux pas*; a socially unacceptable act.

12. **Rom 12:8** he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads [or rules, *proistemi* NT:4291], with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **1Cor 12:28** And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. **1Tim 5:17** Let the elders who rule [*proistemi*] well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. **1Thes 5:12** And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you [*proistemi*] in the Lord and admonish you; **Heb 13:7** Remember those who rule over [*hegeomai* NT:2233] you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct. **Heb 13:17** Obey those who rule over [*hegeomai*] you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

13. *Potestative*: the rule of a potentate, who is unconstrained by law.

14. **Mat 20:25** But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. [26] "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.
15. **2Cor 10:8** For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed.
16. *Mulct*: a fine.
17. **Rom 12:6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith… [8] he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
18. That is, duties without a corresponding office.
19. **1Cor 12:12** For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. [13] For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
20. Eph 4.15-16; Col 2.19
21. **Zec 12:10** "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.
22. *Shifts*: substitutions or additions of man-made practices, to those ordained by God; a "flimsy garment."
23. **Eph 4:15** but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ-- [16] from whom the whole body, joined and

knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. **Col 2:19** and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.

24. KJV **1Pet 4:10** As every man has received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

25. **1Cor 1:5** that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ;

26. **Rom 15:14** Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

27. A strong creative impulse; divine inspiration.

28. "Charis" means *gift* or *grace* – thus it is not an innate ability or craft that exists or operates apart from Christ's Spirit.