



The Holy Spirit

His Gifts and Power





'I assert unhesitatingly that the man who wants to study experimental theology will find no books equal to those of Owen for complete Scriptural and exhaustive treatment of the subjects they handle. If you wish to study thoroughly the doctrine of sanctification I make no apology for strongly recommending Owen on the Holy Spirit.'

J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied*

'An epitome, if not the masterpiece of his writings.'

John Newton





The Holy Spirit

His Gifts and Power



John Owen



CHRISTIAN
HERITAGE





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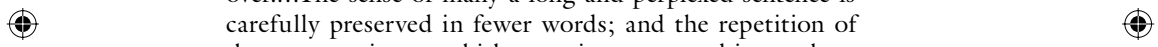
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THIS EDITION

This publication of John Owen's work on the Holy Spirit, along with extracts from other writings on the work of the Spirit in prayer, and on his operations as a Comforter, is based on an edition edited by George Burder, who summarised his work in this way:



Large and numerous quotations from the Greek and Latin fathers are here omitted. Many tedious digressions are passed over...The sense of many a long and perplexed sentence is carefully preserved in fewer words; and the repetition of the same sentiment, which sometimes occurred in one long paragraph, is studiously avoided. By these means, the substance of this excellent but prolix book, is reduced to a moderate size: but...no liberty whatever has been taken with the sense of the author, nor the least wilful misrepresentation made of his views, in a single instance. The method also of the original work remains unaltered.

In addition, several things have been done to make this book more user-friendly:

1. Subheadings based on the original numeric structure have been inserted, with primary and secondary subheadings being included in the contents to allow easier navigation.
2. Sentences enumerating more than five or six items, lists of more than one sentence, and selected notes, are broken off from the main text and displayed.
3. The style and placement of biblical references has been made consistent with modern practice and Roman numerals have been changed to Arabic.





INTRODUCTION

Sinclair B. Ferguson

John Owen (1616–1683), the author of this great and justly famous exposition of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, lived in one of the most remarkable and significant periods of history in the English speaking world. He was a scholar, a pastor, and a theologian. He was also a ‘Puritan’—a description that today requires a little elucidation.

PURITANS—THE STORY OF A MOVEMENT

The term ‘Puritan’ emerged in England early in the Elizabethan period (1558–1603). Originally (perhaps like the word ‘Christian’) a term of reproach, it is best used to refer to those who wanted to ‘purify’ the Church of England of what, in their view, were unbiblical elements in its government (episcopacy), worship (liturgy), and life (failures in sanctity). As a movement it lasted about a hundred years until the time of the Great Ejection in 1662 when 2000 ministers were removed from their livings because of refusal to conform. Thereafter it slowly fragmented into independency on the one hand, and deism on the other—only for its evangelical heartbeat to emerge again in the established church, and beyond, in the days of the eighteenth-century revivals.





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Sadly, the term ‘Puritan’ continues to be used of someone who is a kill-joy, and as a result, interest in the kind of book you are holding was confined to a few lovers of their literature and teaching, and to a few historians. The caricatures of Puritans, disseminated by such influential figures as the historian Lord Macaulay, continue to dominate—Puritans, he noted with a perverse acidity, were opposed to bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bears but because it gave pleasure to the observers. In English literature the archetypical caricature is probably Shakespeare’s character Malvoleo. His very name means ill-will. Hypocritical, judgmental, graceless—he is a ‘Puritan’.

In the last seventy years or so, a good deal of this caricature has been shown to be the falsehood it is. Yes, Puritans were rigorous Christians, but not in the mould of Malvoleo—rather in the mould of the Apostle Paul and his Master Jesus Christ. It was, after all, Jesus who taught his followers to cut off the hand and gouge out the eye that led them into sin; and Paul who urged the early church to live lives of careful obedience to the will of God. Fundamental to the Puritan commitment was their concern to live according to the patterns of Scripture both in community (the church) and as individuals (sanctification). They stood for radical biblical Christianity in a church context where they feared compromise with the comfort of the status quo, and a confusion of liturgy with genuine life, had blunted the edge of the gospel.

A REFORMATION NEEDING REFORMATION?

The background to the English Puritan movement lies in the nature of the English Reformation which was originally, at least on the part of Henry VIII, politically motivated. After the mood-swings that followed the reign of the remarkable Protestant ‘boy-king’ Edward IV and the Rome-ward movement of the reign of his sister, ‘Bloody’ Mary, the so-called Anglican middle way of Elizabeth I prevailed. Realizing that after the previous two reigns she must either govern the church or be ruined by it, Elizabeth sought to create a Protestant conformity.

But the Puritan desire for further reformation would not easily disappear and was evident in some of their central desires which included:





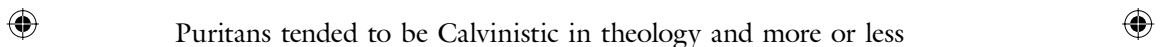
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Revision of the Prayer Book

Puritans objected to four things in public worship:

- The use of the wedding ring in marriage—which they regarded as a hangover from the Roman Catholic ‘sacrament’ of matrimony.
- Kneeling to receive the Lord’s Supper—which they regarded as a compromise with the Roman Mass (despite the so called ‘Black Rubric’ which John Knox had managed to have inserted into the Prayer Book, stressing that this was neither necessary posture nor meant to suggest the physical presence of Christ in the elements).
- The use of the surplice by the clergy—which they regarded, again, as a Roman Catholic accretion smacking of priest-craft.
- Making the sign of the cross at baptism—which they believed, even at best, diverted attention from and indeed obscured the true meaning of sacrament.

Reformation of the Pattern of Church Government



Puritans tended to be Calvinistic in theology and more or less Presbyterian in their convictions about church government. Whether that included a hierarchy of authority beyond the local congregation or not, it did mean that the church should be governed by ministers and ruling elders.

A Godly, Resident, Preaching Ministry

The Puritans were pastors and physicians of the soul. But they understood that the basic counselling sessions of every Christian’s life should take place in the context of the exposition of Scripture. In fact, perhaps the bulk of extant Puritan literature has its origins in the spoken word of preaching. Far from being ignorant kill-joys the Puritan preachers were characteristically learned men with enormous intellectual skills and—in the case of some of them—marvellous gifts in popular communication.

The Puritan movement was just that—a movement; more than that it was a kind of family, even brotherhood, and part of its energy



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lay in the sense many of its leaders shared that God had brought them together to serve him. This is well illustrated in some of the connections that can easily be traced among several of the leading figures. Thus, for example, the great William Perkins of Cambridge tutored William Ames who in turn taught Johannes Cocceius. Perkins was succeeded in Cambridge by Paul Baynes through whom Richard Sibbes was converted. His famous little book, *The Bruised Reed*, in turn had a major influence on Richard Baxter. Sibbes himself was instrumental in the conversion of John Cotton. In turn Cotton was a means used in the conversions of John Preston and Thomas Goodwin as well as in persuading John Owen of the virtue of independency as the biblical form of church government.

A MOVEMENT IN DECLINE

The high point of the Puritan movement came in the mid-seventeenth century. Both its influence and the seeds of its destruction emerge in the events surrounding the English Civil Wars which would eventually lead to the execution of Charles I in January 1649. Until that time, it looked as though some form of presbyterianism might be established as the form of government for all the churches in the United Kingdom. But the execution of the King and the failure of both the Westminster Assembly to effect its original goal (to promote uniformity in doctrine and church life) and the commonwealth to last over the long haul, gave way to the restoration of the monarchy and the events surrounding the Great Ejection. Puritan hopes that had burned so brightly earlier in the century now grew dim and in many cases were extinguished. By this time optimism was on the wane, Puritan energy had been dissipated, and the hope of transforming mainstream Christianity in England was dying. Puritanism became something of a spent force.

A GOLDEN AGE

It may not be saying too much to suggest that England, and perhaps especially London, had never known nor would ever know again,





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such a golden age of evangelical preaching. In the then relatively small city of London spiritual giants preached in churches which were virtually round the corner from each other. It is hard for us to imagine what it must have been like in one lifetime to have been able to listen to the preaching of Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, Richard Sibbes, Thomas Watson, and a host of others. No doubt the very existence of this 'Puritan brotherhood' as it has been called, was a stimulus to these men to grow in their understanding of and ability to expound both the Scriptures and the human heart.

John Owen is universally regarded as the supreme theologian of the Puritan brotherhood. Born into a Puritan home in 1616, despite early spiritual struggles he became a minister in the Church of England, a chaplain to Cromwell, the Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and in his latter years serving in the ministry of the gospel in London. These details of his life can be quickly summarized. Perhaps more telling are the facts that, in addition to the positions of professional and ministerial influence in which he served, he was the designated preacher to Parliament the day following the execution of Charles I—at which time he was only thirty-three years old. His most obvious legacy to the church lies in his massive literary production—twenty-four volumes each of around 600 pages in length. It is not surprising that Owen is widely regarded as the greatest of the English Puritan theologians and perhaps the greatest English theologian—period.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John Owen's first concern was never user-friendliness but exhaustive exposition of biblical truth. At times one has the impression that he thought (as indeed he often wrote) not in English but in Latin—the language of international scholarship in his time. This makes his works challenging to read not simply because of their length and exhaustive nature, but also because they make demands on twenty-first century readers for which our education has scarcely prepared us. Yet, stored up in Owen's prose is some of the richest, deepest and most practical biblical exposition to be found anywhere. Doubtless, were he alive today, a discerning and





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skilled editor would have worked hard to make his writing more accessible to reading Christians.

Since we cannot start from scratch, Philip Ross has undertaken the very considerable labour of working through an earlier editing of Owen's majestic work on the Holy Spirit to put it into the attractive and more readable form in which it now appears. It will well repay any effort that is still required to read and inwardly digest. Simply put, it is one of the few truly great works on the Holy Spirit and is epoch-making both in its scope and its wisdom.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was of crucial theological importance to John Owen. His original exposition covers two volumes of his Works, incorporating almost 1200 pages of teaching, in the edition produced by William Goold in the mid-nineteenth century (*The Works of John Owen*, vols. 3–4 ed. W. H. Goold. Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–53). It is really a series of nine smaller books which started to come from the press in 1674 when Owen was fifty-eight years old. The final volumes appeared twenty years later and were published posthumously in 1693.

A man born in 1616 (as Owen was) could, at least in theory, have known someone who had listened to John Calvin or John Knox. The birthday of the Reformation was not yet a century past. Central to that spiritual and theological revolution had been a recovery of the role of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the individual. Indeed the famous counter-reformation Jesuit missionary to England, Edmund Campion, once said that the great dividing line between Rome and Geneva lay along the axis of the doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In effect, in place of the Holy Spirit the Roman Catholic Church had substituted the role of the church—its teaching authority, its priesthood, and its seven sacraments. In this respect, Owen stood on the shoulders of the Genevan reformer John Calvin whom B.B. Warfield insightfully called 'The theologian of the Holy Spirit'.

Like Calvin before him, however, Owen's exposition of the Spirit's ministry is not only set over against Roman Catholic sacramentalism but also against contemporary teaching that tended to separate the Spirit from the word of God and focus attention on individual revelation by the Spirit rather than on the Spirit's illumination of the revelation in Scripture.





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EMPHASES IN OWEN'S TEACHING

Owen therefore became increasingly conscious of the strategic importance of rightly expounding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a multi-dimensional way. Thus we find him working simultaneously on several fronts.

Theological Exposition

Owen introduces his work on an interesting note: 'I had not the advantage of any one author, ancient or modern, to beat the path before me' (p. 28). He was well aware that a number of the Church Fathers of the first five centuries had written on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Owen was familiar with the work of such great early luminaries as Cyprian, Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom, as well as others). But their chief concern was the Spirit's divine identity. While Owen lays emphasis on this, he is also concerned to expound how the Spirit works. In that connection, one of the most interesting ways in which he anchors his teaching not only to Scripture, but to the life of the church throughout history, is the fascinating way in which he uses the conversion of Augustine, recorded in *The Confessions* as illustrating the paradigm of the Spirit's work in conversion.

Apologetic Teaching

Owen also engaged in polemic, clarifying biblical teaching over against a whole series of errors. Ritualism that retains a form of godliness but has no experience of its power; rationalism that is rooted in man rather than in revelation; spiritualism that placed its stress on the immediacy of experiences rather than on the already given revelation in Scripture.

These ghosts perennially haunt the gospel. That is why part of the contemporary value of Owen's work lies in the way it gives us biblical teaching and principles that can be applied to what we observe in the life of the churches today. He provides the tools we need to be discerning Christians in an undiscerning world.

The disguises error wears may involve contemporary clothing—but the substance underneath tends to be the same. Just as spending





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time in another country enables us to view our own country with clearer lenses, so it is in Christian doctrine. A visit to the masters of the past, to the great issues with which they wrestled and how they thought them through in a biblical way is one of the great needs especially of the evangelical church. In this sense, reading Owen on the Holy Spirit—for all that it is 300 years and more old—may do us much more good than constantly feeling we need to read ‘the latest thing’ on the Spirit.

The Reformation, especially Calvin, emphasized the harmony between the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Over against this, more radical figures tended to bypass Scripture, making claims of direct revelation and the immediate voice of the Holy Spirit. Understandably, Calvin complained that wise discussion is virtually impossible with people who punctuate their every paragraph with references to what the Spirit has told them. The Spirit agrees with himself when he reveals his mind to us in Scripture, Calvin wrote. A little more vividly and picturesquely Owen added a century later: ‘He that would utterly separate the Spirit from the Word had as good burn his Bible’ (p. 133).

We find ourselves in a not dissimilar context today: rationalism that denies the reality of the supernatural; spiritualism that has little patience with careful study and patient biblical exposition as a pathway to the mind of God; ritualism that, weary of a surfeit of experience-centred religion, finds refuge in the orderliness and emotional satisfaction in the mystery of sacramental grace. In this respect it is doubtful if Owen’s work has been either matched or superseded. Yet, with all this, there is a wonderful balance in Owen which emerges in a third characteristic of this work:

Experimental Focus

Christian experience is the fruit of the Spirit’s ministry. Owen returns again and again to a basic axiom of his theology and pastoral ministry: there is a difference between the knowledge of the truth and the knowledge of the power of the truth. He found this distinction in Scripture (for example in John 5: 39–40), and it was enshrined in his own experience. Brought up in a Puritan home, he developed a deep sense that he did not have a real experience of the power of the truth of which he had so much knowledge.





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Translating knowledge into experience thereafter became a passion of his life. That meant for Owen that both knowledge and experience were essential to effective godliness. Within that matrix he saw that it is the Holy Spirit who metamorphoses bare ‘head-knowledge’ into experience of the power of the truth. As his sometime pastoral assistant David Clarkson (himself no mean theologian) would say in his funeral address for Owen that the promotion of Spirit-given holiness in himself and in others was the chief goal to which he employed his intellectual powers.

THE VALUE OF READING OWEN

To note these things is simply to draw attention to the tip of the iceberg. In the pages that follow you will find yourself quarrying theological treasures, and spiritual and pastoral riches, from the Owen Goldmine. Here you will be drawn into a deeper understanding of the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament, a fuller appreciation of his relationship to Christ the Redeemer, a careful and wise exposition of how he works in conversion and regeneration, and how in our progress as Christians he transforms us increasingly to be like Christ, enabling us to overcome sin, to pray, and to experience his ministry as the Comforter.

Such quarrying in Owen’s mine is not always easy. It should be seen as a longer rather than a shorter term commitment. At first even this edition of Owen may stretch some readers. But take your time, remember that quality should be savoured and enjoyed. This is a work that demands meditation—and in a day when we have lost that art we may well find that a book that insists we stop and think is exactly what we need. Then, like a youngster who has been fed a diet of ‘pop’ music and then discovers ‘classical’ music, we will never be able to return to slight and superficial expositions of the Christian way without sensing that they do not satisfy deep down.

Whenever I return to read Owen I find myself at least in part wondering why I spend time reading lesser things.

They have their place; it is important to say that. There is a role for the easy read, the brief book for pleasurable and intellectually undemanding reading, just as there is a place for ‘easy-listening’ music and for classically trained singers producing ‘cross-over’





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recordings in which they sing popular songs. Only snobbery of the worst kind denies that worthwhile 'music' has many levels. In the same way not every Christian book needs to be profound any more than every verse of Scripture in an identical way conveys profound truth. But music listeners with a wide taste recognize that while classical training cannot be completely hidden when a light and popular song is being sung, a 'pop' singer will almost certainly be incapable of singing serious classical music. So, if we are to read light, easily-read, contemporary, short-lived Christian literature, let it be against the background of reading more in the masters. Thus alone will we develop a taste that not only can distinguish between the good and the bad, but between the good and the better, and between the better and the best.

Owen ranks among the best. There are, Francis Bacon wrote, some few books which we should 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.' Owen on the Holy Spirit is one of them.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A general account of the nature and design of the ensuing discourse, being given in the first chapter of it, I shall not detain the reader by a long preface. But it is necessary to mention a few things, with respect to the matter contained in it, and the manner in which it is treated.

The subject matter of the whole is, *The Holy Spirit of God, and His Operations*. And there are two things, either of which is sufficient to render any subject difficult or unpleasant to be treated of; both which we have now to combat. For where the matter itself is abstruse and mysterious, the handling of it cannot be without difficulty; and where it is fallen under public contempt, there is an abatement of satisfaction in the consideration and defence of it. Now all the concerns of the Holy Spirit are eminently 'the deep things of God', for as the knowledge of them wholly depends on divine revelation, so they are in their own nature heavenly, and remote from every thing that the heart of man, in the mere exercise of reason, can conceive. And yet there is nothing in the world more generally despised, as foolish and contemptible. That man forfeits his reputation with many, and is deemed a fanatic, estranged from the conduct of reason, and all generous principles of conversation, who dares avow an interest in His work, or take upon him the defence of it. Wherefore these things must be briefly considered, in order to show whence relief may be had against the discouragements with which they are attended.





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NATURAL UNDERSTANDING IS INSUFFICIENT

It must be granted, that the things here treated of are in themselves mysterious and abstruse: but yet the way in which we may seek an acquaintance with them is made plain in the Scriptures. God, who is the eternal, original spring and fountain of truth, is also the only sovereign cause and author of its revelation to us. And whereas that truth, which originally is one in him, is of various kinds, according to the variety of the things which it respects in its communication to us; the ways and means of its communication are suited to the distinct nature of each particular truth. The truth of natural things is made known from God by the exercise of reason, or the due application of the human understanding to the investigation of them: 'For the things of a man, knoweth the spirit of man that is in him.' But as to supernatural things, the teachings of God are of another nature, and a peculiar application to him for instruction is required from us. And though all that diligence in the use of outward means, which is necessary to the attainment of any other useful knowledge, is indispensably requisite in this; yet if there be not an addition of spiritual ways and means, suited in their own nature, and appointed of God for the reception of supernatural light, and the understanding of the deep things of God, our labour about them will in a great measure be fruitless and unprofitable. For though the letter of the Scripture and the sense of the propositions, are equally exposed to the reason of all mankind; yet the real spiritual knowledge of the things themselves is not communicated to any, but by the special operation of the Holy Spirit: 'For the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God', and they to whom they are revealed by him.

In the first part of the work, which respects the name, divine nature, personality, and mission of the Holy Spirit, I do but declare and defend the faith of the Catholic Church against the Socinians; with what advantage, light, and evidence, is left to the determination of the learned reader.

The second part of our discourse treats of the work of the Holy Spirit in the old creation; in its production, preservation, and rule. And whereas I had not the advantage of any one author, ancient or modern, to beat the path before me, I have confined myself to





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express testimonies of Scripture, with such expositions of them as sufficiently evince their own truth.

The same may be said of what succeeds, concerning his work, under the Old Testament, preparatory for the new creation, in the communication of all sorts of gifts, ordinary and extraordinary; all kinds of skill and ability in things spiritual, natural, moral, artificial, and political.

As to what respects his work on the head of the new creation, or the human nature in the person of Christ, I have been careful to keep strictly to the bounds of sobriety, and not to indulge any curious or unwarrantable speculations. I have, therefore, not only attended diligently to the Scripture, our only infallible guide, but also expressly considered what was taught and believed in the ancient Church in this matter, from which I know that I have not departed.

More I shall not add, as to the first difficulty, with which an attempt of this kind is attended, arising from the nature of the subject. The other, concerning the contempt that is thrown on all these things, must be further considered.

CONTEMPT FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

In all the dispensations of God towards his people under the Old Testament, there was nothing of good communicated to them, nothing of worth or excellency wrought in them or by them, but it is expressly assigned to the Holy Spirit as the author and cause of it. But yet, of all the promises given to them concerning a future and more glorious state of the Church, next to that of the coming of Christ, those are the most eminent which respect a more full communication of the Spirit. Accordingly we find in the New testament, that whatever concerns the conversion of the elect, the edification of the Church, the sanctification and consolation of believers, is so appropriated to him, that, without his special operation, nothing of it can be enjoyed or performed. So careful was God to secure the faith of the Church in this matter, as he knew its eternal concerns to lie therein.

Yet notwithstanding all this evidence, the Church has in most ages been exercised with opposition, either to his person or work;





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nor does it yet cease to be. Yea, though the contradictions of some in former ages have been fierce and clamorous, they have fallen short of what is come to pass in our days. For, not to mention the Socinians who have gathered into one head, or rather ulcerous imposthume, all the virulent oppositions made to his deity or grace by the Photinians, Macedonians, and Pelagians of old; there are others, who professing no enmity to his divine person, yea, admitting the doctrine of the Church concerning it, are yet ready, on all occasions, to despise his whole work. Hence it is become a reproach to make mention of his grace, or to profess an interest in that work of his, as his, without which no man shall see God. And some have taken pains to prove, that various things expressly assigned to him in the gospel, as effects of his power and grace, are only filthy enthusiasms, or, at least, weak imaginations of distempered minds. Nor is there any end of calumnious imputations of those who avow his work, and profess his grace. For let any persons but plead for the known work of the Spirit of God, and they are immediately charged with leaving the rule of the word to attend to revelations and inspirations, as also to forego all thoughts of the necessity of the duties of obedience; though no work of his is pleaded for but that, without which no man can attend to the rule of Scripture as he ought, nor perform one duty of obedience in a proper manner. And there are none of this conspiracy so weak or unlearned, but they are able to scoff at the mention of him, and to cast the very naming of him on others as a reproach. And it is well, if some begin not to deal with the person of Christ in the same manner; for error and profaneness are always fruitful and progressive, and will be so, whilst darkness and corruption abiding on the minds of men, the great adversary is able to make impressions on them. But in these things, not a few please themselves, despise others, and would count themselves injured, if their Christianity should be called in question.

But what value is there in that name, if the whole mystery of the gospel is excluded out of our religion? Take away the dispensation of the Spirit, and his effectual operations in all the intercourse that is between God and man—be ashamed to avow the work attributed to him in the gospel—and Christianity is plucked up by the roots. Yea, this practical contempt of the work of the Holy Spirit, having become the only plausible defiance of religion, is at





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the same time the most pernicious; being constantly accompanied with profaneness, and commonly issuing in atheism.

To obviate these evils in some measure—to vindicate the truth and reality of divine spiritual operations in the Church—to avow what is believed and taught therein concerning the Holy Spirit and his work—to evince the iniquity of those calumnies, under the shade of which some endeavour to countenance themselves in their profane scoffs—to manifest that what is ascribed to him, is not only consistent with religion, but also that, without which religion cannot consist, is the principal design of the ensuing discourse.

Now because the effectual operation of the blessed Spirit, in the regeneration or conversion of sinners, is of all other parts of his work most violently opposed, and has of late been virulently traduced, I have the more largely insisted on it. And because it can neither be well understood, nor duly explained, without the consideration of the state of fallen or corrupted nature, I have also taken in that at large.

Probably some will think, that our discourses on these subjects are carried to an unnecessary and inconvenient length, by that intermixture of practical applications which runs along in them all. But if

'I dare not treat of things of this nature in any other way, than such as may promote the edification of believers.'

they are pleased to consider, that my design was not to handle these things in a controversial manner, but, declaring and confirming the truth, to accommodate the doctrines treated of unto practice; and that I dare not treat of things of this nature in any other way, than such as may promote the edification of believers; they will either be of my mind, or readily admit of my excuse.

However, if these things are neglected or despised by some, there are others who will judge their great concern to lie in such discourses as may direct and encourage them in the holy practice of their duty. And whereas the way and manner of the Spirit, in translating sinners from death to life, have been variously handled by some, and severely reflected on by others, I have endeavoured so to assert what the Scripture teaches concerning them, as is suited, I doubt not, to the experience of those who have been made partakers of that blessed work of the Holy Ghost. And whilst in the substance of what is delivered, I have the plain testimony of





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Scripture, the suffrage of the ancient Church, and the experience of believers to rest upon, I shall not be greatly moved with the censures of those who are otherwise minded.

The only inconvenience with which our doctrine is charged, is the pretended difficulty of reconciling the nature and necessity of our duty, with the efficacy of the grace of the Spirit; I have therefore been so far from waving the consideration of it, that I have embraced every opportunity to examine it in all particular instances, wherein it may be urged with most appearance of probability. And I hope it is made to appear, that not only the necessity of our duty is consistent with the efficacy of God's grace, but also, that as on the one hand we can perform no duty without its assistance, so on the other, that the work of grace itself is no way effectual but in our compliance with it in a way of duty; only with the leave of some persons, or whether they will or no, we give the pre-eminence in all to grace, and not to ourselves. The command of God is the measure and rule of our diligence in a way of duty; and why any one should be discouraged from that diligence, by the consideration of the assistance which God has promised to him, I cannot understand. The work of obedience is difficult, and of the highest importance; so that if any one can be negligent therein, because God will help and assist him, it is because he hates it. Let others do what they please, I shall endeavour to comply with the apostle's advice upon the enforcement which he gives to it: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.'

Another part of the work of the Holy Spirit, consists in our sanctification. How much all his operations herein are despised by some—what endeavours there have been to debase the nature of gospel-obedience, and to substitute a heathenish honesty, at best, in the room thereof, is well known. Hence I thought it necessary to make a diligent inquiry into the nature of evangelical holiness, and that spiritual life unto God, which all believers are created unto in Christ Jesus. And herein, following the conduct of the Scriptures from first to last, the difference that is between them, and the exercise of mere moral virtue, did so evidently manifest itself, that it needed no great endeavour to represent it to any impartial judgement.





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In the last place, succeeds a discourse concerning the necessity of holiness; some regard I confess I had herein, though not much, to the ridiculous clamours of malevolent and ignorant persons, charging those who plead for the efficacy of the grace of God, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, as though they thereby took away the necessity of a holy life. For who would trouble himself about an accusation which is laden with so many convictions of its forgery as there are persons who sincerely believe those doctrines; and which common light gives testimony against in the conversation of those by whom they are received, and by whom they are despised? It was the importance of the thing itself, made peculiarly seasonable by the manifold temptations of the present day, which occasioned that addition to what was delivered about the nature of evangelical holiness; seeing 'if we know these things, happy are we if we do them.'

TWO KINDS OF OPPOSITION

The oppositions to what we believe and maintain herein, are of two sorts. First, such as consists in particular objections to each particular work of the Spirit. Secondly, such as consist in reflections cast upon his whole work. Those of the first kind will be noticed in their proper places; those of the latter sort, may be briefly considered here.

The chief pretence of this nature is, that those who plead for the operations of the Spirit, are enemies to reason, and impugn the use of it in religion. Hence some affirm that they are reproached with the name of 'rational divines' though, as far as I can discern, if it be so, it is as Jerome was beaten by an angel for being a Ciceronian (in the judgement of some) very undeservedly. But the grounds on which this charge should be made good, have not as yet been made to appear; nor has it been evinced, that we ascribe any thing to the efficacy of God's grace, in the least derogatory to reason. I suppose we are agreed herein, that the reason of man in our present state, is insufficient of itself to frame a religion whereby we may please God and be accepted with him. Or, if we are not agreed in this, yet I shall not admit it as a part of our present dispute, wherein we suppose a religion proceeding from revelation. Nor is it pleaded that reason is able, fully and perfectly to comprehend all that is





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revealed; for we have not now to deal with those who reject the mysteries of the Gospel because they cannot comprehend them, under a pretence that what is above reason is against it. And perhaps it will also be granted, that natural reason cannot enable the mind savingly to perceive spiritual things as revealed, without the special aid of the Spirit in illumination. If this be denied by any, as we acknowledge our dissent from them, so we know that we do no injury to reason thereby, and will rather suffer the imputation of so doing, than by renouncing the Scripture turn infidels, that we may be counted rational. But we cannot conceive how reason should be prejudiced by the advancement of our rational faculties, with respect to the exercise of them towards their proper objects, which is all we ascribe to the work of the Spirit. And there are none in the world more ready than we are to grant, that our reason is the only judge of the sense of propositions drawn from Scripture or proposed therein; and we heartily wish that all men might be left peaceable under that determination, where we know they must abide, whether they will or not.

The question is, what reasonableness appears in the mysteries of our religion, when revealed to our reason, and what ability we have to receive, believe, and obey them as such. The latter part of this inquiry is so fully considered in the following discourse, that I shall not insist upon it here; the former may be briefly spoken to. It cannot be denied that the Christian religion is highly reasonable; for it is the effect of the infinite reason of God: and there is no doubt that it appears so to enlightened reason, or the mind of man affected with that work of grace in its renovation, which is so expressly ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the Scripture. For as there is a suitableness between an enlightened mind and spiritual mysteries as revealed, so, seeing them in their proper light, it finds by experience their necessity, goodness, and benefit, with respect to our chief good and supreme end. It only remains then, that we inquire, how reasonable the mysteries of the Christian religion are to the minds of men as corrupted; for that they are so, by the entrance of sin, will be fully proved. Wherefore to speak plainly, as we acknowledge that reason in its corrupted state, is all that any man in that state possesses, whereby to judge of the doctrines revealed in Scripture; so as to spiritual things themselves, it is enmity against them, and they are foolishness unto it. If





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therefore it be a crime, if it be to the impeachment of reason to affirm, that our minds need the renovation of the Spirit, to enable them to understand spiritual things in a spiritual manner, we acknowledge ourselves guilty of it: but otherwise, that by asserting the efficacious operations of the Spirit of God, we deny the proper use and exercise of our own reason, is falsely charged upon us; as will afterwards be fully maintained.

It is further pretended, that, by the operations we ascribe to the Holy Spirit, we expose men to be deceived by satanical delusions, open a door to enthusiasms, unaccountable impulses and revelations, and so make way for all folly and villainy. By what means this charge can be fixed on those, who professedly avow that nothing is good, nothing duty to us, nothing acceptable to God, but what is warranted by the Scripture, has never yet been attempted to be proved. For we not only condemn all these things, but what we teach concerning the Spirit of God, is the only way to secure us from the danger of them. It is true, there have been, and perhaps are among some, satanical delusions, diabolical suggestions, and foul enthusiasms, which have been pretended to proceed from the Spirit of God; for so it is plainly affirmed in the Scripture, wherein directions are also given for their discovery. But if we must therefore reject the real operations of the Spirit of God, we may as well reject the owning of God himself, because the devil has imposed himself on mankind as the object of their worship. What some men mean by impulses, I know not. If it be special aids and inclinations to duties, peculiarly incumbent on persons so assisted and inclined, it requires no small caution that under an invidious name we reject not those supplies of grace which are promised to us, and which we are bound to pray for. But if they mean irrational impressions, or violent inclinations to things or actions which are not acknowledged duties in themselves, nor incumbent on the persons so affected in their present circumstances—as we utterly abandon them, so no pretence is given to them from any thing we believe concerning the Holy Spirit and his operations. For the whole work, which we assign to him, is that alone whereby we are enabled to perform that obedience to God which is required in the Scripture, in the way and manner wherein it is required. And it is probably more out of enmity to him than to us, where the contrariety is pretended. The same may be said concerning





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revelations. They are of two sorts, objective and subjective. Those of the former kind, whether they contain doctrines contrary to Scripture, or additional to it, or seemingly confirmatory of it—are all universally to be rejected. By subjective revelations, nothing is intended, but that work of spiritual illumination, whereby we are enabled to discern the mind of God in the Scripture, which the apostle prays for (Eph. 1: 17–19), the nature of which we shall fully explain.

But it may be said, that our whole labour in declaring the work of the Spirit, as well as what we have briefly spoken in vindication of it, is altogether vain, seeing all we do or say herein is nothing but canting with unintelligible expressions. So some indeed affirm, before they have produced their charter wherein they are constituted the sole judges of what expressions, what way of teaching are proper in things of this nature. But by any thing that yet appears, they seem to be as unqualified for that dictatorship which they assume, as any sort of men that ever undertook the declaration of sacred things. Wherefore, unless they come with better authority, and give a better example of their own manner of teaching, we shall continue to make scripture phraseology our rule and pattern in the declaration of spiritual things, whether intelligible to them or not; and that for reasons so obvious, that they need not here be pleaded.

