

The Way of Life and Death Made Manifest, and Set Before Men

by Isaac Penington

Isaac Penington's sermon calls for a return to true spiritual foundations amidst the dangers of apostasy and false teachings.

Scripture: Psalm 19:9, John 4:23, Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 1:27, Hebrews 4:12, 1 John 2:27

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "True Repentance"

Description

Isaac Penington preaches about the deep-rooted issues in the nation, highlighting the need for true repentance, conversion, and regeneration to restore the lost faith, love, hope, joy, peace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He emphasizes the importance of worshiping in the Spirit, loving one another genuinely, and seeking true wisdom from the fear of God. Penington urges Christians to return to the foundation of Christ within them, to be led by the Spirit, and to experience the true transformation that comes from being born of the Spirit.

Transcript

THE PREFACE

MY soul hath still in remembrance the grievous shakings and rendings that have been in this nation, which entered deep into the bowels of it, and made every heart ache, and every mind astonished. This nation was settled in religion and outward peace, in such a way as was pleasing to most; but yet there was a spirit within, which had been long groaning under oppression, whose sighs and cries entered into the ears of the Lord: and he rose up in his fury and jealousy, and rent the heavens, and rent the earth; so breaking the very foundation of both, that men generally were amazed, and wondered what would become of all. The former religion was almost buried in confusion, and in danger of being utterly lost. A long-spun, corroding war were we entangled in, which administered no hopes nor likelihood of peace. -- The hand of the Lord reached through all these dominions; magistracy, ministry, the common people, the people of God (both such as were accounted so, and such as were indeed so), the line of confusion was stretched over them all; they did all reel and totter like a drunken man, as if they had been so to fall as to rise up no more.

But behold how suddenly and unexpectedly was there a settlement of all again! the nation settled in peace, magistracy settled, ministry settled, the common people settled, and those which were shaken in

their spirits got into their several ways in religion, and settled again. Thus there was a general healing of all again, save only of a few, whose spirits God had so reached, that their wound was incurable; and unless somewhat of God had been brought forth, which the world cannot know (nay, the religious spirit of man, which is below, can no more reach it than the common spirit of the world), they had remained miserable, lost, scattered, and confounded to this day. But the Lord hath in infinite mercy visited them in the season of distress: and there hath a little foolish thing broke forth (at which all the wise and religious in the spirit of this world cannot but stumble), which hath administered relief, and discovered the foundation whereon they also can settle. So that now there is, as it were, a universal settlement, as every creature is gathered into the centre which is proper and suitable to its spirit to bottom on.

Now this I have to say to all; Let every one look to his foundation; for the Lord can arise again; yea, and will arise again, and shake once more; and then the heavens and the earth, which have not a true foundation, cannot but fall. If the earth be not founded upon and settled in righteousness, its present establishment will not stand. If the heavens be not founded upon and settled in truth, they will melt and pass away before the fire of the Lord. There is a spirit that mourneth deeply to the Lord, groaning inwardly, and his ears are open to it, and he will plead the cause of his seed; and the churches and religions wherein the seed of the serpent can live and flourish, shall wither and come to an end. Dust is already become the serpent's food. The spirit of man, in all his exercises of religion, knoweth not the bread of life; but the dead feed upon the dead, and the dead spirit of man loves to have it so. But this cannot continue; for the Lord hath been at work all this while; and when he brings forth the people which he hath been forming, and their religion, the religion of man will appear what it is; and shame and sorrow will be the portion of all who have pleased themselves therein, and trifled away the day of their visitation.

Be wise now, therefore, O ye wise ones! be religious, O ye religious ones! open the eye and ear that have been shut; shut the eye and ear that have been open: stumble no longer, lest ye fall and rise no more. I know ye cannot see; for the wrong eye is open, and the Lord hath designed to hide his wisdom from that eye. If it be possible for you, become poor in spirit; lest ye at last prove to be the rich whom the Lord will send empty away. Sell all apace, that ye may have wherewith to buy the pearl. Ye have not known the appearance of the Lord; but in your wisdom have disdained it, and he hath disdained to make use of you in this great work; but it hath been pleasant to him to lay stumbling-blocks before you, that ye might fall and be broken. The children, the fools, the blind, can see the way, and enter into life; but ye that are men, that are wise, that have both your eyes, that can judge in religion, and determine what is orthodox, and what erroneous, ye cannot.

Oh hear, that your souls may live! Ye know not how short your time is; the day of your visitation passeth away faster than you are aware. The cry hath long gone forth, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, and his spouse hath been preparing for his bed! Ye must off with your old garments, and have the new on. Ye must have the true oil in your lamps, or the door of the kingdom will be shut upon you, and there will be no entrance for you. In plain terms, you must part with all your religion which you have gathered in your own wisdom, which hath grown up in the apostasy, and which only can make a fair show in the dark; but can not endure the searching light of the day of the Lord; and ye must purchase the true religion, the true righteousness, the true innocency and purity of Christ. The old must be done away, truly done away, and the new come in the place. So that flesh and self may be quite destroyed, and nothing but Christ found in you, and you found no where but in Christ, if you enter into his kingdom; for no unclean thing can enter. Therefore put away pride and passion and enmity and fleshly reasonings, and seek out that which is pure, and enter into it, and take up the cross against all that is contrary, that so you may be wrought into it, and

found in it. And turn from all imaginings and conceivings about the meanings of scriptures in the uncertain and erring mind, and come to that which is infallible. And know the silencing of the fleshly part, that the spiritual part may grow in the wisdom, that so ye may learn in the spirit, and know the word of God, and be able to speak it.

My bowels are towards you, and in bowels hath this been written, not to anger or shame you, but to provoke you to jealousy against that dark and evil spirit, which leads you to destruction under the guise and appearance of a light and good spirit. Nor is it to glory over you; for my soul lieth down in shame and sorrow before the Lord, and the reproach of mine own apostasy, and seeking relief from the world (turning from the Lord, who had wounded me, to earthly vanities for ease), will not easily be recovered.

The Lord hath been kind to me in breaking of me in my religion, and in visiting me with sweet and precious light from his own spirit; but I knew it not. I felt, and could not but acknowledge, a power upon me, and might have known what it was by its purifying of my heart, and begetting me into the image of God; but I confined it to appear in a way of demonstration to my reason and earthly wisdom, and for want of satisfaction therein, denied and rebelled against it; and so, after all my former misery, lost my entrance, and sowed seeds of new misery and sorrow to my own soul, which since I have reaped. So that I have no cause to boast over others; but to lie low in abasement of spirit. And what I write is not in any dominion and authority of mine own; but to bring others into that dominion and authority which it is good for me, and for every one else, to be subject to. The Lord strip us of our own understanding, and of that righteousness which is but ours (though we have called it his), that so we may be gathered into, and receive his understanding, and be clothed with his righteousness, and feel his rest and peace! And happy is he that loseth all to gain this; but he that keepeth what he hath too long, shall in the end lose all, and yet not gain this either; therefore be no longer wise in the eye of flesh, or according to what man calleth wisdom; but be TRULY wise.

SOME POSITIONS

Concerning the Apostasy from the Christian Spirit and Life

POSITION I

That there hath been a great apostasy from the Spirit of Christ, and from the true light and life of Christianity: which apostasy began in the apostles' days, and ripened apace afterwards.

THAT the apostles and Christians in their days had the true spirit, the true light, and true life, I think will not be denied. "We know that we are of God, and that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." 1 John 5:19-20. They were truly born of God, and knew the Son of God come, receiving from him a true understanding, and the true light and knowledge in that understanding; and both the understanding and knowledge were rooted and seated in him that is true, where their situation and abiding were "(we are in him that is true)," where they met with the true Spirit, the true God, the true life, even life eternal. That they had the true Spirit from God, "(because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Gal. 4:6) that they had the true light from God, "(God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts," &c. 2 Cor. 4:6) that they had the true life from and in the spirit, "(if we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit." Gal. 5:25)

is generally acknowledged concerning them.

Now of an apostasy from this, beginning even in their days, and to be completed not long after, the Scriptures also make mention. The Apostle Paul speaks expressly of the thing, that there must come "a falling away," and a revealing of "the man of sin, the son of perdition." 2 Thess. 2:3. Christ, the man of salvation, had showed and declared the path of life; had discovered the true church, which was "the pillar and ground of truth," against which the gates of hell could not prevail; had sent the true spirit, which could "lead into all truth," and preserve in the truth: but there must spring up a "man of sin, a son of perdition," who, in a mystery, should work against this, and cause a falling from this to another thing. And this the apostle did not only give a touch of here in writing, but he had likewise told them of these things by word of mouth, to which he refers them, verse 5. This were enough to an eye opened; but for further illustration to the thick understanding of man, which is surrounded with fogs and mists of darkness, some more evidences of scriptures may be given.

Christ foretold of false prophets, Mat. 7:15. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." The Lord sent true prophets under the law, and gave them true visions to declare; Christ sent true apostles and ministers under the gospel, and gave them the truth which they should preach and propagate; but then there were false prophets, false apostles, and ministers to come after, who were never sent by Christ, nor ever received the truth from his spirit. Now these do not come to gather into the life and truth of Christ, but to scatter from it; and so either to begin or uphold an apostasy. And, saith Christ, beware of them; for they come very subtilly; they come in sheep's clothing: they get the garment of the sheep upon their backs, even that very garment which the sheep did wear; but they have not the nature of the sheep, but the nature of the wolf, which is ravenous after the life of the sheep. Mark: where there is the garment without, but not the nature within; where there is the form of godliness, but not the power; where there are scripture words and practices, but not the spirit of life from which they came; there is the false prophet! there is the wolf! there is the apostate! there is the seducer from Christ!

Again, Christ foretells of many false prophets, Mat. 24:11. "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." And verse 24, "For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

And as Christ himself, so his apostles also after him, by the same spirit, foretell of the same thing.

The Apostle Paul speaks of seducing spirits in the latter times, and of doctrines of devils, which should prevail to cause a departure in some from the faith. 1 Tim. 4:1. -- And if, in those days, the power of seducers was so great as to draw from the truth, which was then so manifest and living, how easy it would be to keep from the truth afterwards, when it had been long lost, and out of remembrance, and thereby deceit got into the place and name of it.

The Apostle Peter also foretold of "false teachers," who should "privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them:" and that they should so prevail, that their "pernicious ways" should be followed by many, and "the way of truth evil spoken of." 2 Pet. 2:1-2.

Again, Paul, in his 2nd Epistle to Timothy, speaks of the last days, that the times therein should be "perilous;" chap. 3. Christ had said, "The love of many should wax cold, and iniquity abound." Mat. 24:12. And Paul shows how the times would prove very perilous, by the abounding of iniquity. "In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." 2 Tim. 3:1-4. Behold what kind of fruit sprung up from the false doctrine of the false teachers in the apostasy from the truth. And yet all this under a form of godliness; "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." verse 5. Christ sent the power of godliness into the world, to subdue the root from whence all this springs; to kill the evil nature inwardly: but in the apostasy the evil nature is not killed, but the power denied which should kill it, and the form kept up to cover the evil nature with: the inwardly ravaging nature, which devours and destroys the stirrings and shootings-forth of the just-one in the heart, that gets the sheep's clothing, the form of godliness, to cover itself with. Look anywhere among the apostates from the apostles' spirit and doctrine, and see; Is self-love killed? is covetousness killed? are boasting and pride killed? is the love of pleasures killed? are persecutors and oppressors killed? and are your honor and glory laid in the dust? Nay: they are but covered with the form; their life is still in them; the power wherewith they should be killed was at first denied, and now is lost and not known. Where there is the life, there is the power; and where there is the power, the evil nature is killed. But where the evil nature is not killed, there is only a form of godliness, a covering, a painted sepulchre, but rottenness within.

Now those last days and last times were not far off, but began then: for the apostle exhorts Timothy to turn away from such, verse 5. "From such turn away:" intimating, that even then there were such to be turned away from. -- And he saith, verse 8, that they did then resist the truth, like Jannes and Jambres; who with a likeness of what Moses wrought, but without life, did strive to resist the life and power that was in Moses. And this is the work of all deceivers, to get their own spirit into the likeness, and then to make use of the likeness to oppose and suppress the true life and power. So that they were come even then, when the apostle wrote this epistle to Timothy.

And Jude saith, that "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," were "crept in" already. verse 4 of his epistle.

And the Apostle John speaks very expressly, 1 John 2:18-19. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us," &c. Christ, instructing his disciples concerning the last times, tells them there shall arise false Christs, with great power of deceit. Mat. 24:24. Now, saith John here, there are come "many antichrists, whereby we know it is the last time." Mark: there were many antichrists to begin and lay the foundation of the apostasy, and make way for the great antichrist, who was to be their successor in the apostasy, and not the successor of the apostles in the truth: and these did not abide in the doctrines of the apostles, who preached "the everlasting gospel," nor in the spirit and principle which they were in; but "went out" from them, from their spirit (from the anointing to which they kept, and by which they were kept) into another spirit, and preached another gospel; a gospel which was not the power of God to kill the earthly, but consisted in such a dead, literal knowledge of things as the earthly might be fed and kept alive by. And as the great antichrist was to come, so these antichrists who were to make way for him were already come, and were already laying the foundation of, and beginning the apostasy. So that the spirit of antichrist (that very spirit wherein antichrist succeeded, and in which he grew up, and perfected the apostasy) was then in the world, as this apostle saith yet more manifestly, 1 John 4:3. "This is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world."

Nor was it idle, but it was at work, working itself into the form of godliness, that it might eat out the power, drive out the true spirit, and make a prey of the life. "The mystery of iniquity," saith the Apostle Paul, "doth already work." 2 Thess. 2:7. This spirit did work in a mystery of iniquity to eat out the mystery of godliness, and to set up this mystery of iniquity in the world, instead of the mystery of godliness. And it did prevail to wind itself in the form, and get possession of the form, and also to trample upon and keep under the life. It gained the "outward court" (for when that spirit had corrupted it, the Lord did not regard it, but gave it up to it), and it trod down the "holy city." Rev. 11:2. And this mystery of iniquity did not begin to work many ages after the apostles; but even then, in their days, already: "the mystery of iniquity doth already work."

And look now into the estate of the churches then, according to what the Scripture records of them, and the symptoms of its working will plainly appear. The church of Ephesus (among whom some of the grievous wolves had entered, Acts 20:29) had left their first love. Rev. 2:4. The churches of Galatia were bewitched from the gospel. Gal. 3:1. The church at Coloss was entangled, and made subject to the rudiments of the world, and ordinances (which perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men. Col. 2:20,22. Mark: when once one comes to be subject to the commandments and doctrines of men, to perishing ordinances, and worldly rudiments, which men teach and command, the true state is lost, and the apostasy is entered into. Here the wrong teacher is teaching, and he teacheth the wrong thing, the wrong doctrines, the wrong commandments; and the wrong ear is hearing, which hears the wrong voice, and knoweth not the true; and so the more it heareth and practiseth, and the hotter its zeal groweth, the deeper it still runs into the apostasy. The church at Corinth also was haunted with false apostles, 2 Cor. 11:12-13. insomuch that the apostle was afraid lest that church should be corrupted by them. verse 3. The church in Pergamus had them that held the doctrine of Balaam. Rev. 2:14. The church in Thyatira suffered the woman Jezebel, which called herself a prophetess, to seduce and bring forth children in the apostasy. Rev. 2:20,23. The church in Sardis had a name to live, but was dead; Rev. 3:1. having defiled her garments. verse 4. The church in Laodicea looked upon herself as rich, and increased with goods, and as having need of nothing; but was wretched, miserable, poor, blind (so then the eye was put out), and naked, wanting the gold, wanting the raiment, wanting the eye-salve. Rev. 3:17-18. And lastly, all the Gentiles were warned by Paul, in his epistle to the church at Rome (whereby that church might look upon herself as more particularly concerned therein), to look to their standing; lest they, falling from the faith, from the truth, from the life, into the apostasy (as the Jews had done), might also feel the severity of God, as the Jews had. chap. 11:20-22.

Thus it is evident that the apostasy had got footing, and begun to spread in the apostles' days: and the Apostle John, in the spirit, beholding the future state of things, sees it over-spread and over-run all: "all nations drunk with the cup of fornication." Rev. 18:3. The way of truth had been evil spoken of long before, 2 Pet. 2:2 and the Rock of Ages, which alone can establish in the truth, had been forsaken, and all became as a sea; and up gets the beast (which could not rise while the power of truth stood), and the woman upon the beast, with the cup of deceit and error from the life, in her hand; and this she gives all the nations to drink, and they drink, and are drunk with it.

So that all nations have been intoxicated with the doctrines and practices of the apostasy. They have taken that for truth which the whore told them was truth, and they have observed those things as the commands of God which the whore told them were the commands of God. And by this means they have never come to be married to Christ, to be in union with him, to receive the law of life from his spirit, and to know the liberty from the bondage of corruption; but have been in the bed of fornication with the whore, and have pleased, glutted, and satisfied the whorish principle in themselves with this fornication.

And thus corruption did overspread all the earth; for taking in a corrupt thing instead of the truth, it cannot purify the heart, but corrupt it more. A corrupt profession, corrupt doctrines, may paint, and make a man to himself seem changed; but the corruption still lodges within, which a spiritual eye can easily discern, though he that is in the corruption cannot. The Pharisees seemed glorious to themselves; but Christ saw through them. And every sort of people now, in their several strains and forms of apostasy, seem glorious to themselves; but the spirit of Christ sees through them all, to that which lies underneath (in whom it reigns), and there it finds corruption increased and strengthened in its nature by the form, though outwardly painted with it.

Doth not fornication defile and corrupt? so doth the fornication of the whorish spirit: "the earth was corrupted with it." Rev. 19:2. So that this hath been the universal state of Christendom since the apostasy; the error, the deceit, the fornication of the whore, have corrupted them, and with-held their eyes from the sight of that life and truth which hath power in it to purify them. People, multitudes, nations, tongues, have been all waters: weak, unstable, without any foundation in religion, but fit to be swayed and tossed up and down with every wind or breath of the whore, of whose cup they had all drunk, and by whose spirit they were all guided; for "the whore sat upon them."

Rev. 17:15. The whore, which had whored from God, and so was not the true church, "sat upon people, multitudes, nations, and tongues." She sat upon them; she had them under her; she ruled and guided them by her cup of fornication, and with her spirit of fornication, as a man would guide the beast whereupon he rides. So that all that the nations do from henceforth in religion, is under the whore, according to her guidance, by virtue of the wine that they have drunk out of her cup.

And though God reserved to himself a remnant to worship him, and give some testimony to his truth all this time; yet the "beast" (which was managed by the whore) had power over them: power to make war with them; power to overcome them. Rev. 13:7. The "beast" had power over all "kindreds, tongues, and nations" everywhere; to overcome the "saints," and suppress the truth they at any time were moved to give testimony to; and to set up the worship of the "beast," and make all the earth fall down before that. Rev. 13:7-8. And the second "beast" had, and exercised, all the power of the first "beast," and set up his image, and gave it life, and caused men generally to worship it. Rev. 13:12. "And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive his mark" some way or other, either in their right hand, or in their forehead. verse 16. And such as would not receive his mark, nor worship him, he had power to persecute and kill; and he did kill them. verse 15. And the whore drank their blood. chap. 17:6. And God required it at her hand. chap. 19:2. Though she made the hand of the beast execute it, and would seem to wash her own hands of it.

So that now, since the days of the apostles, even all this time of the apostasy, since the man-child hath been caught up to God, and was not to be found in the earth (which makes it seem such a strange thing for people to say Christ is in them), and the woman hath been in the wilderness, and not in the habitable part of the world, Rev. 12:5-6. if all this time any one will look for the true religion, for the true church, for the true knowledge and worship of God, he must not look on any nation, or any people, or among the tongues, which are cried up in nations and people for the original, and as the chief interpreters of the original; for they are all drunk with the whore's cup: they are under the power, dominion, authority, and service of the "whore," who rides upon the "beast" to whom "power was given over all kindreds, tongues, and nations." But look among the nations who were persecuted, whose blood was drunk, whom the powers of the nations made war against; there alone the testimony of Jesus is to be found. Rev. 12:17. There alone are the witnesses against the present idolatry and corruption, and to some truths or other of

Christ, which God enlightened them with, and whereto he stirred them up to give their testimony, though with the loss of their estates, liberties, or lives.

Now, by what hath been expressed, is it not manifest to every eye that hath room but to let in the letter of the scripture, in simplicity and plainness, that there hath been a great apostasy from the true knowledge of Christ, and a universal corruption and power of death sprung up, instead of the power of his life and grace? "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation," hath disappeared; and "the abomination of desolation" hath taken up its place, and filled it with deadly venom against the truth, and against the life: so that enmity against God, under a pretence of love and zeal to him, hath reigned generally in the hearts of men, from the times of the apostles to this present day. And as the light breaks forth, and their eyes come to be opened, they will see that they have been and are haters of God, and of his life and spirit; but lovers of the world, and of such a religion as suits the worldly spirit.

POSITION II

That in this great apostasy, the true state of Christianity hath been lost.

This must needs be; for if there was an apostasy from the thing, there could not be a retaining of the thing about which the apostasy was. If they apostatized from the spirit, from the light, from the life; then they were gone from it -- they lost it.

Now it may be instanced in every particular how the state of Christianity was lost: but that would be too vast and tedious: it may suffice, therefore, to instance in some considerable ones, which may lead into the discovery of the rest.

1. The true rule of Christianity, or the rule of a Christian, which is to direct, guide, and order him in his whole course, was apostatized from, and lost.

What is a Christian's rule, whereby he is to steer and order his course?

A Christian is to be a follower of Christ, and consequently must have the same rule to walk by as Christ had. A Christian proceeds from Christ, hath the same life in him, and needs the same rule. Christ had the fulness of life, and of his fulness we all receive a measure of the same life. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Ephes. 5:30. Yea, we came out of the same spring of life from whence he came: "For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Heb. 2:11. Now what was his rule? Was it not the fulness of life which he received? And what is their rule? Is it not the measure of life which they receive? Was not Christ's rule the law of the spirit; the law which the spirit wrote in his heart? And is not their rule the law of the spirit; the law which the spirit writes in their hearts? How was Christ made a king and a priest? Was it by the law of a carnal commandment? or by the power of an endless life? And how are they made kings and priests to God?

Rev. 1:6. Is it by the law of a carnal commandment? or is it by the power of the same endless life? "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," saith Christ, "when he cometh into the world." Heb. 10:5,7. But by what rule? By what law? "Thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. And the same spirit who wrote it there, is also to write the new covenant, with all the laws of it, in the heart of every Christian, from the least to the greatest. Heb. 8:9 10. Yea, the same spirit that dwelt in Christ's heart, is to dwell in their hearts, according to the promise of the covenant.

Ezek. 36:27. This was Paul's rule, after which he walked, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1-2. This made him "free from the law of sin and death." Where is the law of sin written? Where is the law of death written? Is it not written in the heart? And must not the law of righteousness and life be written there also, if it be able to deal with sin and death? The spirit forms the heart anew, forms Christ in the heart, begets a new creature there, which cannot sin "(He that is born of God sins not)."

And this is the rule of righteousness, the new creature, or the spirit of life in the new creature. Gal. 6:15-16. "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature. And as many as "walk according to this rule, peace be on them." Mark: there is the rule; the new creature, which is begotten in every one that is born of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" and this new creature is to be his rule. And as any man walks according to this rule, according to the new creature, according to the law of light and life that the spirit continually breathes into the new creature, he hath peace; but as he transgresses that, and walks not after the spirit, but after the flesh, he walks out of the light, out of the life, out of the peace, into the sea, into the death, into the trouble, into the condemnation.

Here then is the law of the converted man, the new creature; and the law of the new creature is the spirit of life which begat him, which lives, and breathes, and gives forth his law continually in him. Here is a Christian; here is his rule: he that hath not the new creature formed in him, is no Christian; and he that hath the new creature, hath the rule in himself. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." 1 John 2:20. How came they to know all things?

Doth not John say, it was by the "unction"? The anointing was in them, a fountain or well-spring of light and life, issuing forth continually such rivers and streams of life within, as they needed no other teacher in the truth and way of life. verse 27. The "Comforter" did refresh their hearts sufficiently, and led them into all truth. Search the apostles' epistles, and ye shall find them testifying of the Lord's sending his spirit into the hearts of Christians; and exhortations to them not to grieve or quench the spirit, but to follow as they were led.

They were to "live in the spirit," and to "walk in the spirit." Gal. 5:25. And the spirit was to walk, and live, and bring forth his own life and power in them. 2 Cor. 6:16. And what can be the proper and full rule of God's sons and daughters, but the light of the spirit of life, which they receive from their Father? Thus God did advance the state of a believer above the state of the Jews under the law: for they had the law, though written with the finger of God, yet but in tables of stone; but these have the law, written by the finger of God in the table of their hearts.

Theirs was a law without, at a distance from them, and the priest's lips were to preserve the knowledge of it, and to instruct them in it; but here is a law within, nigh at hand, the immediate light of the spirit of life shining so immediately in the heart, that they need no man to teach them; but have the spirit of prophecy in themselves, and quick, living teachings from him continually, and are made such kings and priests to God, as the state of the law did but represent. The gospel is the substance of all the shadows contained in the law.

A Christian is he that comes into this substance, and lives in this substance, and in whom this substance lives; and his rule is the substance itself, in which he lives, and which lives in him. Christ is the substance, who lives in the Christian, and he in Christ: Christ lives in him by his spirit, and he in Christ by the same spirit: there he lives, and hath fellowship with the Father and the Son, in the light wherein they live, and not by any outward rule. 1 John 1:6-7.

But what is the rule now in the apostasy?

Among the Papists, the rule is the Scripture, interpreted by the church (as they call themselves), with a mixture of their own precepts and traditions.

Amongst the Protestants, the rule is the Scriptures, according as they can understand them by their own study, or according as they can receive the understanding of them from such men as they account orthodox. And hence arise continual differences and heats and sects; one following this interpretation, another that.

And this is a grievous apostasy, and the root, spring, and foundation of all the rest; for he that misseth in his beginning, he that begins his religion without the true rule, how can he proceed aright in any thing afterwards?

Object. But are not the Scriptures the word of God? -- And is not the word of God to be a Christian's rule? If every one should be left to his own spirit, what confusion and uncertainty would this produce!

Ans. The Scriptures are not that living Word, which is appointed by God to be the rule of a Christian; but they contain words spoken by the spirit of God, testifying of that Word, and pointing to that Word which is to be the rule. "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think to have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; and ye will not come to me that ye may have life." John 5:39-40. The Scriptures are to be searched for the testimony which they give of Christ; and when that testimony is received, Christ is to be come to, and life received from him.

But the Pharisees formerly, and Christians since (I mean Christians in name) search the Scriptures; but do not come to Christ for the life, but stick in the letter of the Scriptures, and oppose the life with the letter, keeping themselves from the life by their wisdom and knowledge in the letter. Thus they put the Scriptures into the place of Christ, and so honor neither Christ nor the Scriptures. It had been no honor to John to have been taken for the Light; his honor was to point to it: nor is it any honor to the Scriptures to be called the Word of God; but their honor is to discover and testify of the Word.

Now hear what the Scriptures call the Word; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. "And the Word was made flesh." verse 14. This was the name of Christ, when he came into the world in the flesh, to sow his life in the world. And when he comes again into the world, out of a far country, to fight with the beast and false prophet, and to cleanse the earth of the whore's fornication and idols, wherewith she had corrupted it, he shall have the same name again; "his name is called the Word of God."

Rev. 19:13. So Peter calleth that the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1 Pet. 1:23. And this Word that liveth and abideth for ever, was the Word that they preached. verse 25. And they that believed did not cry up the words that the apostles spake for the Word; but received the thing they spake of, "the ingrafted Word;" which being received with a meek, quiet, and submissive spirit, "is able to save the soul." Jam. 1:21. This is "the Word of faith" that is "nigh, in the heart and in the mouth."

Rom. 10:8. This is the Word that stands at the door of the heart, and speaks to be let in "(Behold, I stand at the door and knock):" and when it is let in, it speaks in the heart what is to be heard and done. It is nigh; it is in the heart, and in the mouth; to what end? "That thou mightest hear it, and do it." The living Word, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," divides in the mouth, and divides in

the heart, the vile from the precious; yea, it reacheth to the very inmost of the heart, and cuts between the roots, Heb. 4:12. and this thou art to hear and do.

Thou art to part with all vile words, the vile conversation, the vile course and worship of the world outwardly, and the vile thoughts and course of sin inwardly, as fast as the Word discovers them to thee, and to exercise thyself in that which is folly and madness to the eye of the world, and a grievous cross to thine own worldly nature; yea, when the Word reaches to the very nature, life, and spirit within, from whence all that comes, that strong, wise root of the fleshly life in the heart must not be spared, nor that foolish, weak thing (to man's wise eye) which is brought instead thereof, be rejected: which, when it is received, is but like a little seed, even the least of seeds; and when it grows up, it is a long while but like a child; and yet keeping in that childishness, out of the wisdom, it enters into that kingdom which the greatest wisdom of man (in all his zealous ways and forms of religion) falls short, and is shut out of.

This is the word of life; this is the true, living rule, and way to eternal life; and this is the obedience; this is the hearing and doing of the word. "He that hath an ear, let him hear. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. 13:5. Are ye in the faith? Then Christ is in you. Is not Christ in you? Then ye are in the reprobate state, out of the faith. Is Christ in you, and shall he not hold the reins, and rule?

Shall the living Word be in the heart, and not the rule of the heart? Shall he speak in the heart, and the man or woman in whom he speaks run to the words of scripture formerly spoken, to know whether these be his words or no? Nay, nay, his sheep know his voice better than so. Did the apostle John, who had seen and tasted and handled and preached the word of life, send Christians to his epistles, or any other part of scripture, to be their rule? Nay, he directed them to the anointing as a sufficient teacher. 1 John 2:27.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:38. He that hath the fountain of life in him, issuing out rivers of living water continually, hath he need to go forth to fetch in water? "The kingdom of heaven is within you," saith Christ; and he bids "seek the kingdom." Light the candle, sweep thine own house, seek diligently for the kingdom; there it is, if thou canst find it. Now he that hath found the kingdom within, shall he look without, into words spoken concerning the kingdom, to find the laws of the kingdom?

Are not the laws of the kingdom to be found within the kingdom? Shall the kingdom be in the heart, and the laws of the kingdom written without in a book? Is not the gospel the ministration of the Spirit? And shall he who hath received the Spirit run back to the letter to be his guide? Shall the living Spirit, that gave forth the Scriptures, be present, and not have pre-eminence above his own words? What is the proper intent of the letter? Is it not to testify of the Spirit, and to end in the Spirit?

The law, the prophets, John, led to Christ in the flesh; and he was to be the increasing light, when they should decrease. Christ's words in the flesh, the apostles' words afterwards, and all words since, are but to lead to Christ in the spirit, to the eternal, living substance; and when words of Christ, of the apostles, or any other words spoken from the same spirit in these days, have brought to the spirit, to the feeling and settling of the soul in the living foundation, and to the building and perfecting of the man of God therein, they have attained their end and glory.

But to cry up these, not understanding their voice, but keeping at a distance from the thing that they invite to: the words hereby are put out of their place, out of their proper use and service, and so attain neither

their end nor their glory. And though man put that upon them which seems to be a greater glory, namely: to make them his rule and guide; yet, it being not a true glory, it is no glory, but a dishonor both to them and to the Spirit, who gave them to another end.

Now for the other part of the objection, that if men should be left to their own spirits, and should follow the guidance of their own spirits, it would produce confusion and uncertainty: I do acknowledge it; it would do so. -- But here is no leaving of a man to his own spirit spoken of or intended, but the directing and guiding of a man to the Word and Spirit of life; to know and hear the voice of Christ, which gathers and translates man out of his own spirit into his Spirit: and here is no confusion or uncertainty; but order, certainty, and stability.

The light of God's Spirit is a certain and infallible rule, and the eye that sees that, is a certain eye; whereas man's understanding of the scriptures is uncertain and fallible; he, having not the true ear, receiveth such a literal, uncertain knowledge of things into his uncertain understanding, as deceives his soul. And here man, in the midst of his wisdom and knowledge of the scriptures, is lost in his own erring and uncertain mind, and his soul deceived, for want of a true root and foundation of certainty in himself. But he that is come to the true Shepherd, and knows his voice, he cannot be deceived. Yea, he can read the scripture safely, and taste the true sweetness of the words that came from the life; but man who is out of the life feeds on the husks, and can receive no more. He hath gathered a dead, dry, literal, husky knowledge out of the scripture, and that he can relish; but should the life of the words and things there spoken of be opened to him, he could not receive them, he himself being out of that wherein they were written, and wherein alone they can be understood. But poor man having lost the life, what should he do? He can do no other but cry up the letter, and make as good shift with it as he can; though his soul the mean while is starved, and lies in famine and death, for want of the bread of life, and a wrong thing is fed.

The Scribes and Pharisees made a great noise about the law and ordinances of Moses, exclaiming against Christ and his disciples as breakers and profaners of them; yet they themselves did not truly honor the law and ordinances of Moses, but their own doctrines, commandments, and traditions. So those now who make a great noise about the Scriptures, and about the institutions of the apostles, do not honor the Scriptures, or the institutions of the apostles; but their own meanings, their own conceivings, their own inventions and imaginations thereupon. They run to the Scriptures with that understanding which is out of the truth, and which never shall be let into the truth; and so being not able to reach and comprehend the truth as it is, they study, they invent, they imagine a meaning; they form a likeness, a similitude of the truth as near as they can, and this must go for the truth; and this they honor and bow before as the will of God; which being not the will of God, but a likeness of their own inventing and forming, they worship not God, they honor not the Scriptures, but they honor and worship the works of their own brain. And every scripture which man hath thus formed a meaning out of, and hath not read in the true and living light of God's eternal Spirit, he hath made an image by, he hath made an idol of; and the respect and honor he gives this meaning, are not a respect and honor given to God, but to his own image, to his own idol. Oh, how many are your idols, ye Christians of England, as ye think yourselves to be! How many are your idols, ye gathered churches! How full of images and idols are ye, ye spiritual notionists, who have run from one thing to another, with the same mind and spirit wherewith ye began at first! But the founder of images has never been discovered and destroyed in you, and so he is still at work among you all; and great will your sorrow and distress be, when the Lord's quick eye searcheth him out, and revealeth his just wrath against him.

In my heart and soul I honor the Scriptures, and long to read them throughout with the pure eye, and in the pure light of the living Spirit of God: but the Lord preserve me from reading one line of them in my own will, or interpreting any part of them according to my own understanding, but only as I am guided, led, and enlightened by him, in the will and understanding which come from him. And here all scripture, every writing of God's Spirit, which is from the breath of his life, is profitable to build up and perfect the man of God; but the instructions, the reproofs, the observations, the rules, the grounds of hope and comfort, or whatever else which man gathers out of the Scriptures (he himself being out of the life), have not the true profit, nor build up the true thing; but both the gatherings and the gatherer are for destruction. And the Lord will ease the Scripture, of the burden of man's formings and invention from it, and recover its honor again, by the living presence and power of that Spirit that wrote it; and then it shall be no longer abused and wrested by man's earthly and unlearned mind, but, in the hands of the Spirit, come to its true use and service to the seed, and to the world.

2. The true worship was lost. The true worship of God in the gospel is in the Spirit. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." John 4:23. The true worship is in the spirit, and in the truth, and the true worshippers worship there; and such worshippers the Father seeks, and such worship he accepts; but all other worship is false worship, and all other worshippers are false worshippers; such worshippers as God seeks not, nor can accept their worship.

Did God refuse Cain's sacrifice formerly? and can he accept any sacrifice or worship now that is offered in that nature? Why, he that worships out of the Spirit, he worships in that nature; but he that worships aright, must have his nature changed, and must worship in that thing wherein he is changed, in that faith, in that life, in that nature, in that Spirit whereby and whereto he is changed. For without being in this, and keeping in this, it is impossible to please God in any thing.

He that is the true worshipper is a believer, and in his worship he must keep to his rule, the law of faith, the law of the Spirit of Life in him, the law which he receives by faith fresh from the Spirit of Life continually. He must hear and observe the voice of the living Word in all his worship, and worship in the presence and power and guidance of that, as that moves, and as that carries on, or God is not worshipped in the Spirit. I shall instance only in prayer. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

Eph. 6:18. Mark: all prayer and supplication must be in the Spirit; yea, it must be always in the Spirit, which speaks in the heart to God, and makes the intercession, or it is no prayer. If a man speak ever so much from his own spirit, with ever so much earnestness and affection, yet it is no prayer, no true prayer, but only so far as the Spirit moves to it, and so far as the Spirit leads and guides in it. If a man begin without the Spirit, or go on without the Spirit, this is out of the worship; this is in his own will, and so will-worship; and according to his own understanding, and so fleshly worship; both which are to be crucified, and not to be followed in any thing under the gospel.

"We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit," (here are the true worshippers, "the circumcision;" and here is the true worship, "in the Spirit;" and they have no bounds and limits in the flesh, wherein their strength and confidence are broken) "and have no confidence in the flesh." If a man address himself to any worship of God without his Spirit, hath he not confidence in the flesh? If he begin without the moving of his Spirit, doth he not begin in the flesh? If he go on, without the Spirit's carrying on, doth he not proceed in the strength and confidence of the flesh?

But the worship of the Spirit is in its will, and in its time, and is carried on by its light and power, and keeps down the understanding and affectionate part of man, wherein all the world worship, and offer up the unaccepted sacrifices, even the lame and the blind, which God's soul hates.

Now this worship, as it is out of man's will and time, and in that which continueth, so it is continual. There is a continual praying unto God. There is a continual blessing and praising of his name, in eating, or drinking, or whatever else is done. There is a continual bowing to the majesty of the Lord in every thought, in every word, in every action, though it be in worldly things and occasions; yet the Spirit of the Lord is seen there, and the tongue confesseth him there, and the knee boweth to him there. This is the true worship, and this is the rest or sabbath wherein the true worshippers worship. When the creation of God is finished; when the child is formed in the light, and the life breathed into him; then God brings him forth into his holy land, where he keeps his sabbath. They that are in the faith, which is the substance of the things hoped for under the law, are come from all the shadows and types of the law, and from all the heathenish observations of days and times in the spirit of this world, where the spirit of man is hard at work, into the true sabbath, into the true rest, where they have no more to work, but God works all in them in his own time, according to his own pleasure. "We which have believed, do enter into rest." Heb. 4:3. "And he that is entered into his rest, hath ceased from his works, as God from his." verse 10. He that hath the least taste of faith, knows a measure of rest, finding the life working in him, and his soul daily led further and further into life by the working of the life, and the heavy yoke of his own laboring after life taken off from his shoulders. Now here is the truth, here is the life, here is the sabbath, here is the worship of the soul, that is led into the truth, and preserved in the truth.

But what is the worship now in the apostasy?

Among the Papists, a very gross worship; a worship more carnal than ever the worship of the law was: for that, though in its nature it was outward and carnal, yet it was taught and prescribed by the wisdom of God, and was profitable in its place, and to its end; but this was invented by the corrupt wisdom, and set up in the corrupt will of man, and hath no true profit, but keeps from the life, from the power, from the Spirit, in fleshly observations, which feed and please the fleshly nature. Look upon their days consecrated to saints, and their canonical hours of prayer, and their praying in an unknown tongue, with their fastings, feasting, saying of Ave-Marys, Pater-nosters, Creeds, &c., are not all these from the life, out of the Spirit, and after the invention, and in the will of the flesh? Ah! their stink is greater than the flesh-pots of Egypt.

And the worship of the Protestants comes too near them: for their worship is also from a fleshly principle, and in their own times and wills, and according to their own understanding and apprehension of things, and not from the rising up and guidance of the infallible life of the Spirit in them; for that they will quench. They also observe days and times, and perishing ordinances, and are not come out of the flesh, into that Spirit where the worship is to be known, and to be in.

3. The faith, the true faith, was lost.

The faith which gives victory over the world; the faith which feeds the life of the just, and slays the unjust; the faith which is pure, the mystery whereof is held in a pure conscience; the faith which gives entrance into the rest of God; the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; this hath been lost, and is not yet to be found among those who go for Christians.

For those who challenge the name of Christians, and say they believe in Christ, and have faith in him, cannot with their faith overcome the world; but are daily overcome by the world. Where is there a

Christian, but he is either in the honors, or in the fashions, or in the customs, or in the worships of the world, if not in them all? He is so far from overcoming these, that he is overcome with them; yea, so overcome, so drunk therewith, that he hath even lost his senses, and thinks he may be a Christian, and in a good state while he is there.

And the life of the just is not fed by their faith, but the unjust nature is fed, and the righteous witness, which is raised up and lives by the true faith, is kept down, and cannot bring forth his life in them, because of their unbelief; for that is the proper name of their faith; for being not true faith, it is not faith, but unbelief.

And the faith of Christians (so called) is not a mystery (they know not the mystery of it, which is held in a pure conscience), but consists in believing an historical relation, and in a fleshly improving of that, and can be held in an impure conscience.

Neither are they entered into rest by their faith; for they know not the sabbath in the Lord, but are still in a shadowy sabbath.

Neither is it the substance of what they hope for; but the substance of what they hope for is strange to them. They are not come to "Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to God the Judge, Christ the Mediator, and the blood of sprinkling," and so to unity and certainty in the life; but are in opinions, ways, and practices suitable to the earthly spirit; which may easily be shaken, and must be shaken down to the ground, if ever they know the building of God, and the true faith.

4. The love, the true love, was lost.

The innocent love, which thinks no ill, nor wishes no ill, much less can do any ill to any; but suffereth long, and is kind, meek, humble, not seeking its own, but the good of others; this love is lost. The love unfeigned is banished; a feigned love, such a love as enmity and violence proceed from, is got in the place of it. The true love loves the enemy, and cannot return enmity for enmity, but seeks the good of them who hate it: but this love can persecute and hate that which it calls the friend, nay, the brother, because of some difference in opinion or practice. The love that was in Christ, taught him to lay down his life for his sheep; and he that hath the same love, can lay down his life for his brother. But the love that is now amongst Christians tends rather to the taking away of life.

What is the love amongst the Papists? See their inquisitions, their wraths, their fire and faggot, &c.

What is their love in New England? Is it not a love that can imprison or banish their brother, if he differ but a little from them in judgment or practice about their worship? Yea, they can whip, burn in the hand, cut off ears, just like the bishops of Old England. If one had told them, when they fled from the persecution of the bishops here, that they themselves should have done such things, they would have been apt to reply, with Hazael, What! are we dogs? But they fled from the cross, which would have crucified that persecuting spirit, and so carried it alive with them; and being alive, it grew by degrees to as great an head there, as it did in the bishops here.

And what is the love here in Old England? Is it not a love that whips, stocks, imprisons, stones, jeers? Yea, the very teachers (which should be patterns of love to others), they will cast into prison, and distrain the goods of their brother, even almost to his undoing, for maintenance, according to the law of the land made in the apostasy. See the Record of Sufferings for Tithes in England, which may make any tender

heart bleed to read it, and is like to lie as a brand of infamy on the magistracy and ministry of England to succeeding generations. Is this the love of the righteous seed? Or is it Cain's love, which is in profession, in word, in show, but not in deed and in truth? And how can these love God? Nay, if the true love of God were in them, this enmity could not stand, nor such fruits of it shoot forth. But they have not seen the Father or the Son. And that life of them which appears in the earth, the evil spirit in man seeks to destroy, that he may keep up his own image and shadow of life, which the nature of the true life in its appearance fights against. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." -- And by this may all men know, that those that now go for Christians are not Christ's disciples, in that they do not love one another. They are not at unity in the light, and so cannot love one another there; but are only in unity in forms, in opinions, in professions, in practices; so any difference there stirs up the enmity, causing risings in the heart against them at least, if it proceed not further. The true love grows from true union and fellowship in the light; where that is not known, there cannot be true love in the Spirit, but a feigned love in the flesh.

5. The true hope, joy, and peace are lost.

The true ground of hope is Christ in the heart, and the true hope is that hope which ariseth from this ground, from the feeling of Christ there; "Christ in you the hope of glory." Col. 1:27. What is the true Christian's hope? It is Christ in him; he "hath eternal life abiding in him;" and he knows that cannot but lead to glory. But what is the common Christian's hope? He fastens his hope upon the relation and his belief of an history. "He that believeth shall be saved." I believe; therefore I shall be saved. -- And thus, as he hath got up a wrong faith, and a wrong love, so he gets up a wrong hope. And this hope will perish; for it is the hope of the hypocrite, or an hope in the hypocritical nature, which complies with scripture words, but is not in union with God, nor with the life of the scriptures; and so being without the anchor, is tossed in the waves of the sea.

And the true joy is in the Spirit, from what is felt, and enjoyed, and hoped for there. But the common Christian's joy is from things which he gathers into and comprehends in his understanding; or from flashes which he feels in the affectionate part, from a fire and sparks of his own kindling, from whence he fetches his warmth and comfort.

And the true peace stands in the reconciliation with God, by having that broken down which causeth the wrath, and to which the wrath is, wherever it is found. The Lamb of God breaks down the wall of separation in the heart; the blood of Jesus, wherein is the life, cleanseth away the sin there, maketh the heart pure, uniteth the pure heart to the pure God: here is union, here is fellowship, here is peace; but the common Christian's peace is from a misunderstanding of scriptures, while the wall of separation is standing, while wickedness lodges in the heart. They reason themselves, from scripture words, into an apprehension that God is at peace with them, and that they are in union with him; while that of God which is in them, witnesseth against them, and checks them, and wars with them; and they are not one with it, and cannot be, in that nature and understanding wherein their life lies, to which belongs no peace.

6. The true repentance, conversion, and regeneration have been lost.

The true repentance is from dead works, and from the dead principle whence all the dead works proceed: but these have not been repented of, but cherished in the apostasy. The praying, the striving, the worshipping, the fighting, have been from the dead principle. The building up and whole exercise of religion in the apostasy, have been in that understanding which is to be destroyed; and the will, which

should have been crucified, hath been pleased and fed with its religion.

The true conversion is from the power of Satan to God, from the darkness to the light: but in the apostasy, men have not known God or Satan, the light or the darkness; but have mistook, taking the one for the other, worshipping the devil instead of God, Rev. 13:4. and following the dark conceivings of their own and other men's minds concerning scripture, and calling them light.

Regeneration is a changing of man, whereby the birth is born of the Spirit; the stripping of the creature of its own nature, of its own understanding, of its own will, and forming it anew in the womb of the Spirit; so that the old creature is passed away, and comes forth a new thing, which grows up daily in the new life towards the fulness of Christ. But men have been so far from being born of the Spirit, that they have not so much as known the gift of the Spirit in them; but to this day are enemies, and at a distance from that of God in them, which is pure. And if they could but open their eyes, they would see that their birth is fleshly, and consists, at best, but in a such a conformity to the letter, as the old nature may imitate and attain; but the immortal seed is not sprung up in them, nor they dead to the mortal, nor alive to the immortal.

7. The true wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are lost.

The true wisdom stands in the fear of God, and departing from evil: this those that are taught of God learn, and thereby are made wise unto salvation. But most that are called Christians are not come to the fear of God; and many are got above it, looking upon it as legal, and not appertaining to the gospel; but the gospel state is love, which casteth out fear. Doth the love of God refuse or cast out the fear of God? Nay: it casts out the fear that brings bondage; the fear that came in by transgression; which fear is stirred up, and discovered by the law. And this is a fear of sin, or a fear arising from sin, through the law's manifestation of it, and the wrath against it, which causeth both the fear, and much bondage from the fear: and this the gospel (which discovers the love, the mercy, the grace, the power, and unites to them) frees from, and casts out. But then there is a fear of God; a fear wrought in the heart by his Spirit; a fear which is part of the new covenant ("I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me"); a fear which is part of the "everlasting gospel," Rev. 14:6-7. and "endureth for ever." Ps. 19:9. And this fear is not bondage, but liberty; it is indeed bondage to the unjust, but liberty to the just; for where this fear is, sin is departed from; it sets free; it delivers the feet out of the snare of iniquity: there is true liberty. Can sin prevail in that heart, where the pure, clean fear of God is placed by God to keep it down? The love of God doth not cast out this fear, but keeps in this fear; and this fear keeps the heart clean from the evil which defiles, and preserves the love from the enmity, which springs up where this fear is not. Now this fear, in the apostasy, w

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