



The Works of JOHN OWEN

EDITED BY
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The Banner of Truth Trust

GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

The words of the text explained: "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. viii. 6.

THE expression in our translation sounds differently from that in the original. "To be spiritually minded," say we. In the original it is φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, as that in the former part of the verse is φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός, which we render "to be carnally minded." In the margin we read, "the minding of the flesh" and "the minding of the Spirit;" and there is great variety in the rendering of the words in all translations, both ancient and modern. "Prudentia, sapientia, intelligentia, mens, cogitatio, discretio, id quod Spiritus sapit,"—"The wisdom, the understanding, the mind, the thought or contrivance, the discretion of the Spirit, that which the Spirit savoureth," are used to express it. All our English translations, from Tindal's, the first of them, have constantly used, "To be spiritually minded;"; neither do I know any words whereby the emphasis of the original, considering the design of the apostle in the place, can be better expressed. But the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them must be farther inquired into.

In the whole verse there are two entire propositions, containing a double antithesis, the one in their subjects, the other in their predicates; and this opposition is the highest and greatest that is beneath eternal blessedness and eternal ruin.

The opposite *subjects* are, the "minding of the flesh" and the "minding of the Spirit," or the being "carnally minded" and "spiritually minded." And these two do constitute two states of mankind, unto the one of which every individual person in the world doth belong; and it is of the highest concernment unto the souls of men to know whether of them they appertain unto. As unto the qualities expressed by "the flesh" and "the Spirit," there may be a

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mixture of them in the same persons at the same time,—there is so in all that are regenerate; for in them “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary,” Gal. v. 17. Thus different, contrary actings in the same subject constitute not distinct states; but where either of them is predominant or hath a prevalent rule in the soul, there it makes a different state. This distinction of states the apostle expresseth, Rom. viii. 9, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” Some are “in the flesh, and cannot please God,” verse 8; they are “after the flesh,” verse 5; they “walk after the flesh,” verse 1; they “live after the flesh,” verse 13. This is one state. Others are “in the Spirit,” verse 9; “after the Spirit,” verse 5; “walk after the Spirit,” verse 1. This is the other state. The first sort are “carnally minded,” the other are “spiritually minded.” Unto one of these doth every living man belong; he is under the ruling conduct of the flesh or of the Spirit; there is no middle state, though there are different degrees in each of these as to good and evil.

The difference between these two states is great, and the distance in a manner infinite, because an eternity in blessedness or misery doth depend upon it; and this at present is evidenced by the different fruits and effects of the principles and their operations which constitute these different states, which is expressed in the opposition that is between the predicates of the propositions: for the minding of the flesh is “death,” but the minding of the Spirit is “life and peace.”

“To be carnally minded is death.” Death, as it is absolutely penal, is either spiritual or eternal. The first of these it is formally, the other meritoriously. It is formally death spiritual: for they that are carnally minded are “dead in trespasses and sins,” Eph. ii. 1; for those who “fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind are by nature children of wrath,” verse 3,—are penally under the power of spiritual death. They are “dead in sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh,” Col. ii. 13. And it is death eternal meritoriously: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,” Rom. viii. 13; as “the wages of sin is death,” chap. vi. 23.

The reason why the apostle denounces so woful a doom, so dreadful a sentence, on the carnal mind, he declares in the two next verses: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” If it be thus with the carnal mind, it is no wonder that “to be carnally minded is death;” it is not meet it should be any thing else. That which is enmity against God is under the curse of God.

In opposition hereunto it is affirmed that “to be spiritually minded,” or the minding of the Spirit, “is life and peace.” And

these are the things which we are particularly to inquire into,—namely, What is this “minding of the Spirit;” and then, How it is ✓ “life and peace.”

1. The “Spirit” in this context is evidently used in a double sense, as is usual where both the Holy Spirit himself and his work on the souls of men are related unto. (1.) The *person of the Spirit of God himself*, or the Holy Ghost, is intended by it: Rom. viii. 9, “If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” And so also verse 11, “The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead.” He is spoken of as the principal efficient cause of all the spiritual mercies and benefits here and afterward insisted on. (2.) It is used for the *principle of spiritual life* wrought in all that are regenerate by the Holy Ghost; for “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” John iii. 6.

It is most probable that the name “Spirit” is here used in the latter sense,—not for the Spirit himself, but for “that which is born of the Spirit,” the principle of spiritual life in them that are born of God; for it is, in its nature, actings, inclinations, and operations, opposed unto “the flesh,” Rom. viii. 1, 4, 5. But “the flesh” here intended is that inherent corrupt principle of depraved nature whence all evil actions do proceed, and wherewith the actions of all evil men are vitiated. The opposition between them is the same with that mentioned and declared by the apostle, Gal. v. 17, etc. Wherefore “the Spirit” in this place is the holy, vital principle of new obedience, wrought in the souls of believers by the Holy Ghost, enabling them to live unto God.

2. Unto this Spirit there is φρόνησις ascribed, which, as we have intimated, is translated with great variety. Φρόνησις is the principal power and act of the mind. It is its light, wisdom, prudence, knowledge, understanding, and discretion. It is not so with respect unto speculation or ratiocination merely, which is διάνοια or σύνεσις; but this φρόνησις is its power as it is practical, including the habitual frame and inclination of the affections also. It is its faculty to conceive of things with a delight in them and adherence unto them, from that suitableness which it finds in them unto all its affections. Hence we translate φρόνεῖ sometimes to “think,”—that is, to conceive and judge, Rom. xii. 3; sometimes to “set the affection,” Col. iii. 2, —to have such an apprehension of things as to cleave unto them with our affections; sometimes to “mind,” to “mind earthly things,” Phil. iii. 19, which includeth that relish and savour which the mind finds in the things it is fixed on. Nowhere doth it design a notional conception of things only, but principally the engagement of the affections unto the things which the mind apprehends.

Φρόνησις, the word here used, expresseth the actual exercise, τῆς φρό-

✓ mind
+
affection

vīσeως, of the power of the mind before described. Wherefore, the “minding of the Spirit” is the actual exercise of the mind as renewed by the Holy Ghost, as furnished with a principle of spiritual life and light, in its conception of spiritual things and the setting of its affections on them, as finding that relish and savour in them wherewith it is pleased and satisfied.

And something we must yet farther observe, to give light unto this description of the “minding of the Spirit,” as it is here spoken of:—

1. It is not spoken of absolutely as unto what it is in itself, but with respect unto its power and prevalency in us, significantly rendered, “To be spiritually minded;” that is, to have the mind changed and renewed by a principle of spiritual life and light, so as to be continually acted and influenced thereby unto thoughts and meditations of spiritual things, from the affections cleaving unto them with delight and satisfaction. So, on the contrary, it is when men “mind earthly things.” From a principle of love unto them, arising from their suitableness unto their corrupt affections, their thoughts, meditations, and desires are continually engaged about them. Wherefore,—

2. Three things may be distinguished in the great duty of being spiritually minded, under which notion it is here recommended unto us:—

(1.) The *actual exercise of the mind*, in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about things spiritual and heavenly. So is it expressed in the verse foregoing: “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,”—they think on them, their contrivances are about them, and their desires after them; “but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” They mind them by fixing their thoughts and meditations upon them.

(2.) The *inclination, disposition, and frame of the mind*, in all its affections, whereby it adheres and cleaves unto spiritual things. This “minding of the Spirit” resides habitually in the affections. Wherefore, the *φρόνησις* of the Spirit, or the mind as renewed and acted by a spiritual principle of light and life, is the exercise of its thoughts, meditations, and desires, on spiritual things, proceeding from the love and delight of its affections in them and engagement unto them.

(3.) A *complacency of mind*, from that gust, relish, and savour, which it finds in spiritual things, from their *suitableness* unto its constitution, *inclinations*, and *desires*. There is a salt in spiritual things, whereby they are condited and made savoury unto a renewed mind; though to others they are as the white of an egg, that hath no taste or savour in it. In this gust and relish lies the sweetness and satisfaction of spiritual life. Speculative notions about spiritual things, when they are alone, are dry, sapless, and barren. In this gust we

taste by experience that God is gracious, and that the love of Christ is better than wine, or whatever else hath the most grateful relish unto a sensual appetite. This is the proper foundation of that “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.”

All these things do concur in the minding of the Spirit, or to constitute any person spiritually minded. And although the foundation of the whole duty included in it lies in the affections, and their immediate adherence unto spiritual things, whence the thoughts and meditations of the mind about them do proceed, yet I shall treat of the distinct parts of this duty in the order laid down, beginning with the exercise of our thoughts and meditations about them; for they being the first genuine actings of the mind, according unto the prevalency of affections in it, they will make the best and most evident discovery of what nature the spring is from whence they do arise. And I shall not need to speak distinctly unto what is mentioned in the third place, concerning the complacency of the mind in what its affections are fixed on, for it will fall in with sundry other things that are to be spoken unto.

But before we do proceed, it is not amiss, as I suppose, to put a remark upon those important truths which are directly contained in the words proposed as the foundation of the present discourse; as,—

1. *To be spiritually minded is the great distinguishing character of true believers from all unregenerate persons.* As such is it here asserted by the apostle. All those who are “carnally minded,” who are “in the flesh,” they are unregenerate, they are not born of God, they please him not, nor can do so, but must perish for ever. But those who are “spiritually minded” are born of God, do live unto him, and shall come to the enjoyment of him. Hereon depend the trial and determination of what state we do belong unto.

2. *Where any are spiritually minded, there, and there alone, is life and peace.* What these are, wherein they do consist, what is their excellency and pre-eminence above all things in this world, how they are the effects and consequents of our being spiritually minded, shall be afterwards declared.

There is neither of these considerations but is sufficient to demonstrate of how great concernment unto us it is to be spiritually minded, and diligently to inquire whether we are so or no.

It will therefore be no small advantage unto us to have our souls and consciences always affected with and in due subjection unto the power of this truth,—namely, that “to be spiritually minded is life and peace;” whence it will follow, that whatever we may think otherwise, if we are not so, we have neither of them, neither life nor peace. It will, I say, be of use unto us if we are affected with the power of it; for many greatly deceive themselves in hearing the word. They

admit of sacred truths in their understanding, and assent unto them, but take not in the power of them on their consciences, nor strictly judge of their state and condition by them, which proves their ruin; for hereby they seem to themselves to believe that whereof in truth they believe not one syllable as they ought. They hear it, they understand it in the notion of it, they assent unto it, at least they do not contradict it, yea, they commend it oftentimes and approve of it, but yet they believe it not; for if they did, they would judge themselves by it, and reckon on it that it will be with them at the last day according as things are determined therein.

Or such persons are, as the apostle James declares, "like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was," chap. i. 23, 24. There is a representation made of them, their state and condition, unto them in the word; they behold it, and conclude that it is even so with them as the word doth declare; but immediately their minds are filled with other thoughts, acted by other affections, taken up with other occasions, and they forget in a moment the representation made of themselves and their condition. Wherefore all that I have to offer on this subject will be utterly lost, unless a firm persuasion hereof be fixed on our minds, unless we are under the power of it, that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" so that whatever our light and profession be, our knowledge or our duty, without this we have indeed no real interest in life and peace.

These things being premised, I shall more practically open the nature of this duty, and what is required unto this frame of spirit. To be "spiritually minded" may be considered either as unto the nature and essence of it, or as unto its degrees; for one may be so more than another, or the same person may be more so at one time than another. In the first way it is opposed unto being "carnally minded;" in the other unto being "earthly minded."

"To be carnally minded is," as the apostle speaks, "death;" it is so every way; and they who are so are dead in trespasses and sins. This is opposed unto being "spiritually minded," as unto its nature or essence. When a man, as unto the substance and being of the grace and duty intended, is not spiritually minded, he is carnally minded,—that is, under the power of death spiritual, and obnoxious unto death eternal. This is the principal foundation we proceed upon, whence we demonstrate the indispensable necessity of the frame of mind inquired after.

There are two ways wherein men are earthly minded. The one is absolute, when the love of earthly things is *wholly predominant* in the mind. This is not formally and properly to be carnally minded, which is of a larger extent. The one denomination is from

Fleshly-minded :: *earthly-minded*
Flesh *earth*

the root and principle, namely, the flesh; the other from the object, or the things of the earth. The latter is a branch from the former, as its root. To be earthly minded is an operation and effect of the carnal mind in one especial way and instance; and it is as exclusive of life and salvation as the carnal mind itself, Phil. iii. 19; 1 John ii. 15, 16. This, therefore, is opposed unto the being of spiritual mindedness no less than to be carnally minded is. When there is in any a love of earthly things that is predominant, whence a person may be rightly denominated to be earthly minded, he is not, nor can be, spiritually minded at all; he hath no interest in the frame of heart and spirit intended thereby. And thus it is evidently with the greatest part of them who are called Christians in the world, let them pretend what they will to the contrary.

Again; there is a being earthly minded which consists in an inordinate affection unto the things of this world. It is that which is sinful, which ought to be mortified; yet it is not absolutely inconsistent with the substance and being of the grace inquired after. Some who are really and truly spiritually minded, yet may, for a time at least, be under such an inordinate affection unto and care about earthly things, that if not absolutely, yet comparatively, as unto what they ought to be and might be, they may be justly said to be earthly minded. They are so in respect of those degrees in being spiritually minded which they ought to aim at and may attain unto. And where it is thus, this grace can never thrive or flourish, it can never advance unto any eminent degree.

This is the Zoar of many professors,—that "little one" wherein they would be spared. Such an earthly mindedness as is wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded, as unto the state and condition which depends thereon, they would avoid; for this they know would be absolutely exclusive of life and peace. They cannot but know that such a frame is as inconsistent with salvation as living in the vilest sin that any man can contract the guilt of. There are more ways of spiritual and eternal death than one, as well as of natural. All that die have not the plague, and all that perish eternally are not guilty of the same profligate sins. The covetous are excluded from the kingdom of God no less severely than fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, and thieves, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. But there is a degree in being earthly minded which they suppose their interest, advantages, relations, and occasions of life do call for, which they would be a little indulged in; they may abide in such a frame without a disparagement of their profession. And the truth is, they have too many companions to fear an especial reflection on themselves. The multitude of the guilty take away the sense and shame of the guilt. But, besides, they hope well that it is not inconsistent abso-

lutely with being spiritually minded; only they cannot well deny but that it is contrary unto such degrees in that grace, such thriving in that duty, as is recommended unto them. They think well of others who are spiritually minded in an eminent degree, at least they do so as unto the thing itself in general; for when they come unto particular instances of this or that man, for the most part they esteem what is beyond their own measure to be little better than pretence. But, in general, to be spiritually minded in an eminent degree, they cannot but esteem it a thing excellent and desirable;—but it is for them who are more at leisure than they are; their circumstances and occasions require them to satisfy themselves with an inferior measure.

To obviate such pretences, I shall insist on nothing, in the declaration of this duty and the necessity of it, but what is incumbent on all that believe, and without which they have no grounds to assure their conscience before God. And at present in general I shall say, *Whoever he be who doth not sincerely aim at the highest degree of being spiritually minded which the means he enjoyeth would lead him unto, and which the light he hath received doth call for,—whoever judgeth it necessary unto his present advantages, occasions, and circumstances, to rest in such measures or degrees of it as he cannot but know come short of what he ought to aim at, and so doth not endeavour after completeness in the will of God herein,—can have no satisfaction in his own mind, hath no unfailing grounds whereon to believe that he hath any thing at all of the reality of this grace in him. Such a person possibly may have life, which accompanies the essence of this grace, but he cannot have peace,* which follows on its degree in a due improvement. And it is to be feared that far the greatest number of them who satisfy themselves in this apprehension, willingly neglecting an endeavour after the farther degrees of this grace and growth in this duty, which their light or convictions, and the means they enjoy, do suggest unto them, are indeed carnally minded and every way obnoxious unto death.

CHAPTER II.

A particular account of the nature of this grace and duty of being spiritually minded—How it is stated in and evidenced by our thoughts.

HAVING stated the *general concerns* of that frame of mind which is here recommended unto us, we may proceed to inquire more particularly into the nature of it, according unto the description before given in distinct propositions. And we shall carry on

both these intentions together,—first, to show *what it is*, and wherein it doth consist; and then, *how it doth evidence itself*, so as that we may frame a right judgment whether it be in us or no. And we shall have no regard unto them who either neglect or despise these things on any pretence whatever; for this is the word according unto which we shall all shortly be judged, “To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” ✓

Thoughts and meditations as proceeding from spiritual affections are the first things wherein this spiritual mindedness doth consist, and whereby it doth evidence itself. Our thoughts are like the blossoms on a tree in the spring. You may see a tree in the spring all covered with blossoms, so that nothing else of it appears. Multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing. Ofttimes where there are most blossoms there is least fruit. But yet there is no fruit, be it of what sort it will, good or bad, but it comes in and from some of those blossoms. The mind of man is covered with thoughts, as a tree with blossoms. Most of them fall off, vanish, and come to nothing, end in vanity; and sometimes where the mind doth most abound with them there is the least fruit; the sap of the mind is wasted and consumed in them. Howbeit there is no fruit which actually we bring forth, be it good or bad, but it proceeds from some of these thoughts. Wherefore, ordinarily, these give the best and surest measure of the frame of men’s minds. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Prov. xxiii. 7. In case of strong and violent temptations, the real frame of a man’s heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object, for whether they are from Satan’s suggestions, or from inward darkness, trouble, and horror, they will impose such a continual sense of themselves on the mind as shall engage all its thoughts about them; as when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts run quite another way than when he is in safety about his occasions. But ordinarily voluntary thoughts are the best measure and indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grass which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts; they are the original actings of the soul, the way whereby the heart puts forth and empties the treasure that is in it, the waters that first rise and flow from that fountain. Every man’s heart is his treasury, and the treasure that is in it is either good or evil, as our Saviour tells us. There is a good and bad treasure of the heart; but whatever a man hath, be it good or evil, there it is. This treasure is opening, emptying, and spending itself continually, though it can never be exhausted; for it hath a fountain, in nature or grace, which no expense can diminish, yea, it increaseth and getteth strength by it. The more you spend of the

*thoughts =
the Measure
of a man*

Prov 23.7

treasure of your heart in any kind, the more will you abound in treasure of the same kind. Whether it be good or evil, it grows by expense and exercise; and the principal way whereby it puts forth itself is by the thoughts of the mind. If the heart be evil, they are for the most part vain, filthy, corrupt, wicked, foolish; if it be under the power of a principle of grace, and so have a good treasure in it, it puts forth itself by thoughts suitable unto its nature and compliant with its inclinations.

Wherefore, these thoughts give the best measure of the frame of our minds and hearts, I mean such as are voluntary, such as the mind of its own accord is apt for, inclines and ordinarily betakes itself unto. Men may have a multitude of thoughts about the affairs of their callings and the occasions of life, which yet may give no due measure of the inward frame of their hearts. So men whose calling and work it is to study the Scripture, or the things revealed therein, and to preach them unto others, cannot but have many thoughts about spiritual things, and yet may be, and oftentimes are, most remote from being spiritually minded. They may be forced by their work and calling to think of them early and late, evening and morning, and yet their minds be no way rendered or proved spiritual thereby. It were well if all of us who are preachers would diligently examine ourselves herein. So is it with them who oblige themselves to read the Scriptures, it may be so many chapters every day. Notwithstanding the diligent performance of their task, they may be most remote from being spiritually minded. See Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But there is a certain track and course of thoughts that men ordinarily betake themselves unto when not affected with present occasions. If these be vain, foolish, proud, ambitious, sensual, or filthy, such is the mind and its frame; if they be holy, spiritual, and heavenly, such may the frame of the mind be judged to be. But these things must be more fully explained.

It is the great character and description of the frame of men's minds in an unregenerate condition, or before the renovation of their natures, that "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. They are continually coining fig-
ments and imaginings in their hearts, stamping them into thoughts
that are vain, foolish, and wicked. All other thoughts in them are occasional; these are the natural, genuine product of their hearts. Hence the clearest, and sometimes first, discovery of the bottomless evil treasure of filth, folly, and wickedness, that is in the heart of man by nature, is from the innumerable multitude of evil imaginations which are there coined and thrust forth every day. So the wicked are said to be "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Isa. lvii. 20. There is a fulness

of evil in their hearts, like that of water in the sea; this fulness is troubled or put into continual motion by their lusts and impetuous desires; hence the mire and dirt of evil thoughts are continually cast up in them.

It is therefore evident that the predominancy of voluntary thoughts is the best and most sure indication of the inward frame and state of the mind; for if it be so on the one side as unto the carnal mind, it is so on the other as unto the spiritual. Wherefore, to be spiritually minded, in the first place, is to have the course and stream of those thoughts which we ordinarily retreat unto, which we approve of as suited unto our affections, to be about spiritual things. Therein consists the minding of the Spirit.

But because all men, unless horribly profligate, have thoughts about spiritual things, yet we know that all men are not spiritually minded, we must consider what is required unto such thoughts to render them a certain indication of the state of our minds. And there are these three things required hereunto:—

FIRST, That they be natural, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions. The psalmist mentions the "inward thought" of men, Ps. xl ix. 11, lxiv. 6; but whereas all thoughts are the inward acts of the mind, it should seem that this expression makes no distinction of the especial kind of thoughts intended from those of another sort. But the difference is not in the formal nature of them, but in the causes, springs, and occasions. Inward thoughts are such as arise merely and solely from men's inward principles, dispositions, and inclinations, that are not suggested or excited by any outward objects. Such in wicked men are those actings of their lusts whereby they entice and seduce themselves, James i. 14. Their lusts stir up thoughts leading and encouraging them to make provision for the flesh. These are their "inward thoughts." Of the same nature are those thoughts which are the "minding of the Spirit." They are the first natural egress and genuine acting of the habitual disposition of the mind and soul.

Thus in covetous men there are two sorts of thoughts whereby their covetousness acts itself:—First, such as are occasioned by outward objects and opportunities. So it was with Achan, Josh. vii. 21. "When," saith he, "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them." His sight of them, with an opportunity of possessing himself of them, excited covetous thoughts and desires in him. So is it with others every day, whose occasions call them to converse with the objects of their lusts. And some by such objects may be surprised into thoughts that their minds are not habitually inclined unto; and therefore when they are known, it is our duty to

avoid them. But the same sort of persons have thoughts of this nature arising from themselves only, their own dispositions and inclinations, without any outward provocations. "The vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity," Isa. xxxii. 6; and this he doth as the "liberal deviseth liberal things," verse 8. From his own disposition and inclination, he is contriving in his thoughts how to act according to them. So the unclean person hath two sorts of thoughts with respect unto the satisfaction of his lust:—First, such as are occasioned in his mind by the external objects of it. Hereunto stage plays, revellings, dancings, with the society of bold persons, persons of corrupt communication, do contribute their wicked service. For the avoidance of this snare, Job "made a covenant with his eyes," chap. xxxi. 1; and our Saviour gives that holy declaration of the evil of it, Matt. v. 28. But he hath an habitual spring of these thoughts in himself, constantly inclining and disposing him thereunto. Hence the apostle Peter tells us that such persons "have eyes full of an adulteress, that cannot cease from sin," 2 Epist. ii. 14. Their own affections make them restless in their thoughts and contrivances about sin. So is it with them who are given to excess in wine or strong drink. They have pleasing thoughts raised in them from the object of their lust represented unto them. Hence Solomon gives that advice against the occasion of them, Prov. xxiii. 31. But it is their own habitual disposition which carries them unto pleasing thoughts of the satisfaction of their lust; which he describes, verses 33–35. So is it in other cases. The thoughts of this latter sort are men's inward thoughts; and such must these be of spiritual things, whence we may be esteemed spiritually minded.

Ps. xlv. 1, saith the psalmist, "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King." He was meditating on spiritual things, on the things of the person and kingdom of Christ. Hence his heart "bubbled up" (as it is in the original) "a good matter." It is an allusion taken from a quick spring of living waters: from its own life and fulness it bubbles up the water that runs and flows from it. So is it with these thoughts in them that are spiritually minded. There is a living fulness of spiritual things in their minds and affections that springeth up into holy thoughts about them.

From hence doth our Saviour give us the great description of spiritual life. It is "a well of living water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 10, 12. The Spirit, with his graces residing in the heart of a believer, is a well of living water. Nor is it such a well as, content with its own fulness, doth not of its own accord, without any instrument or pains in drawing, send out its refreshing waters,

as it is with most wells, though of living water; for this is spoken by our Saviour in answer and opposition unto that objection of the woman, upon his mention of giving living water, verse 10: "Sir," saith she, "thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; whence wilt thou have this water?" verse 11. "True," saith he, "such is the nature of this well and water, dead, earthly things,—they are of no use, unless we have instruments, lines and buckets, to draw withal. But the living water which I shall give is of another nature. It is not water to be kept in a pit or cistern without us, whence it must be drawn; but it is within us, and that not dead and useless, but continually springing up unto the use and refreshment of them that have it." For so is it with the principle of the new creature, of the new nature, the Spirit and his graces, in the hearts of them that do believe,—it doth of itself and from itself, without any external influence on it, incline and dispose the whole soul unto spiritual actings that tend unto eternal life. Such are the thoughts of them that are spiritually minded. They arise from the *inward* principle, inclination, and disposition of the soul,—are the bubblings of this well of living water; they are the mindings of the Spirit.

So our Saviour describes them, Matt. xii. 35, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." First, the *man* is good; as he said before, "Make the tree good, or the fruit cannot be good," verse 33. He is made so by grace, in the change and renovation of his nature; for in ourselves we are every way evil. This good man hath a treasure in his heart. So all men have; as the next words are, "The evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart." And this is the great difference that is between men in this world. Every man hath a treasure in his heart; that is, a prevailing, inexhaustible principle of all his actings and operations. But in some this treasure is good, in others it is evil; that is, the prevailing principle in the heart, which carries along with it its dispositions and inclinations, is in some good and gracious, in others it is evil. Out of his good treasure a good man bringeth forth good things. The first opening of it, the first bringing of it forth, is by these thoughts. The thoughts that arise out of the heart are of the same nature with the treasure that is in it. If the thoughts that naturally arise and spring up in us are for the most part vain, foolish, sensual, earthly, selfish, such is the treasure that is in our hearts, and such are we; but where the thoughts that thus naturally proceed from the treasure that is in the heart are spiritual and holy, it is an argument that we are spiritually minded.

Where it is not thus with our thoughts, they give no such evidence as that inquired after. Men may have thoughts of spiritual things, and that many of them, and that frequently, which do not

arise from this principle, but may be resolved into two other causes;—1. Inward force; 2. Outward occasions.

1. *Inward force*, as it may be called. This is by *convictions*. Convictions put a kind of a force upon the mind, or an impression that causeth it to act contrary unto its own habitual disposition and inclination. It is in the nature of water to descend; but apply an instrument unto it that shall make a compression of it and force it unto a vent, it will fly upwards vehemently, as if that were its natural motion. But so soon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately unto its own proper tendency, descending towards its centre. So is it with men's thoughts oftentimes. They are earthly,—their natural course and motion is downwards unto the earth and the things thereof; but when any efficacious conviction presseth on the mind, it forceth the egress of its thoughts upwards towards heavenly things. It will think much and frequently of them, as if that were their proper motion and course; but so soon as the power of conviction decays or wears off, that the mind is no more sensible of its force and impression, the thoughts of it return again unto their old course and track, as the water tends downwards.

This state and frame is graphically described, Ps. lxxviii. 34–37, “When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.” Men in troubles, dangers, sickness, fears of death, or under effectual conviction of sin from the preaching of the word, will endeavour to think and meditate on spiritual things; yea, they will be greatly troubled that they cannot think of them more than they do, and esteem it their folly that they think of any thing else: but as freedom and deliverance do approach, so these thoughts decay and disappear; the mind will not be compelled to give place unto them any more. The prophet gives the reason of it, Jer. xiii. 23, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” They have had another haunt, been taught another course, the habit and inclination of the mind lies another way, and they will no longer tend towards spiritual things than an impression is on them from their convictions.

And it is an argument of very mean attainments, of a low and weak degree in this frame of heart, or in our being spiritually minded, when our thoughts of spiritual things do rise or fall according unto renewed occasional convictions. If when we are under rebukes from God in our persons or relations, in fears of death and the like, and

withal have some renewed convictions of sin in commission, for omission of duties, and thereon do endeavour to be more spiritually minded in the constant exercise of our thoughts on spiritual things, which we fail in, and these thoughts decay as our convictions in the causes of them do wear off or are removed, we have attained a very low degree in this grace, if we have any interest in it at all.

Water that riseth and floweth from a living spring runneth equally and constantly, unless it be obstructed or diverted by some violent opposition; but that which is from *thunder-showers* runs furiously for a season, but is quickly dried up. So are those spiritual thoughts which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace in the heart; they are even and constant, unless an interruption be put upon them for a season by temptations. But those which are excited by the *thunder of convictions*, however their streams may be filled for a season, they quickly dry up and utterly decay.

2. Such thoughts may arise in the minds of men not spiritually minded, from *outward means and occasions*. Such I intend as are indeed useful, yea, appointed of God for this end among others, that they may ingenerate and stir up holy thoughts and affections in us. But there is a difference in their use and operation. In some they excite the inward principle of the mind to act in holy thoughts, according unto its own sanctified disposition and prevalent affections. This is their proper end and use. In others they occasionally suggest such thoughts unto the minds of men, which spring only from the notions of the things proposed unto them. With respect unto this end also they are of singular use unto the souls of men. Howbeit such thoughts do not prove men to be spiritually minded. When you till and manure your land, if it brings forth plentiful crops of corn, it is an evidence that the soil itself is good and fertile; the dressing of it only gives occasion and advantage to put forth its own fruit-bearing virtue. But if in the tilling of land, you lay much dung upon it, and it brings forth here and there a handful where the dung lay, you will say, “The soil is barren; it brings forth nothing of itself.” These means that we shall treat of are as the tilling of a fruitful soil, which helps it in bringing forth its fruit, by exciting its own virtue and power;—they stir up holy affections unto holy thoughts and desires. But in others, whose hearts are barren, they only serve, as it were, some of them here and there, to stir up spiritual thoughts, which gives no evidence of a gracious heart or spirit. But because this is a matter of great importance, it shall be handled distinctly by itself.