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THE SERMONS OF JOHN BRINE

The Opposition of Flesh and Spirit in Believers Considered:

by John Brine

(London: George Keith, 1761)

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth
— Psa. 60: 4*



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SERMON 34

THE OPPOSITION OF FLESH AND SPIRIT IN BELIEVERS, CONSIDERED:

IN A SERMON, PREACHED *FEBRUARY THE 8TH, 1761.*

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GAL. 5:17.

For the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the Things that ye would.

IN this Context the Apostle cautions the Saints to whom he writes, against those Evils, which they ought to a void; and exhorts them to practice those Duties, which were incumbent on them. In the Verse next preceding the Words now read, he says, *If ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfill the Lust of the Flesh*; that is, if ye act under the Direction and Influence of the holy Spirit, ye will not gratify the Desires of the Flesh. ***In the Text, the following things are to be considered,***

I. The Flesh and spirit.

II. The Lusting of the Flesh against the Spirit, and the Lusting of the Spirit against the Flesh.

III. The Contrariety of the one to the other.

IV. The Conclusion, or Inference arising from thence, *viz.* Believers *cannot do the Things that they would.*

I. Let us take into Consideration the Flesh and the Spirit.

1. The Flesh. Some who approve not of the Representation which the Scripture gives of the Depravity Nature, and which Believers find to be true by Experience, interpret the Flesh of our inferior sensitive Part, in Distinction from our superior intellectual Part. They think, that sensual Appetite is meant by it, and not our reasonable Part. But this Interpretation is not to be admitted, because our whole Nature is the Subject of Corruption and moral Impurity. Not only our inferior, but also our superior Part. Reason in us is depraved, as Appetite in us is vitiated. And such Works are attributed by the Apostle to the Flesh, which evidently respect our intellectual and superior Part, viz. *Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heretics, Envyings*. And therefore the Flesh designs moral Evil, which discovers itself in the Actings of our intellectual, as well as of our sensitive Part. Our Mind, *i.e.* our reasonable Nature, as *carnal, is Enmity against God, and is not subject to his Law, neither indeed can be*. The Flesh is a corrupt Principle and Spring of Action, which is seated in all our Powers. In this Sense it is to be understood in these Words of our Lord, *That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh: that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit* (Joh. 3: 6.): and this is the Import of it, in what the Apostle expresses concerning himself; *In me, that is in my Flesh, dwelleth no good Thing. So then with the Mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh the Law of Sin* (Rom. 7:18, 25.). From this impure Fountain proceed all the sinful Actings, both of our superior and inferior Part. For our rational, as well as our sensitive Part, is the Subject of it.

2. We are to consider what is meant by the Spirit. Some think that the holy Spirit is intended, who dwells in the Saints. It is certain, that he opposes the Flesh in them. If he is designed, lusting against the Flesh, attributed to him, is to be understood in the same Sense as making Intercession in Believers is, which is ascribed to him: *The Spirit itself maketh Intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered. He maketh Intercession for the Saints according to the Will of God* (Rom. 8:27, 28.). Making Intercession is not the Act of the Spirit; it is the Act of the Saints under his Influence, as the Spirit of *Grace and Supplications, helping their Infirmities* in Prayer to GOD. And thus lusting against the Flesh, is not the Act of the Person of the Spirit; for it is the proper Act of the Saints, under his gracious and effectual Influence. As the Person of the Spirit does not pray in Believers, but they themselves, pray under his

Direction and Guidance; so the Person of the Spirit does not lust against the Flesh in them, but they themselves lust against it under his powerful Excitation. The Act is properly theirs, and not his, otherwise than influentially, as the efficient Cause thereof. I rather think, that Spirit designs a holy Principle of Action in the Saints, which is the proper Opposite of the Flesh in them. As the Flesh undoubtedly means an impure Fountain, from which spring evil Acts, it seems to me best to understand by the Spirit its contrary, in the Saints, which is a pure Fountain of good Acts. It is the Produce of the holy Spirit; *That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. The Wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* As it is his Production in the Soul, its Nature must be spiritual, pure, and holy; and such are all the Acts which arise from it;. The Flesh, in Believers, is a Source of evil Actions, and the Spirit in them, is a Spring of good Actions.

II. *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; the one opposes the other.*

1. The Flesh lusteth against, or opposes, the Spirit, in Thought, Volition, and in the Actings of the Affections towards holy Objects.

(1.) The Flesh opposes the Spirit, in Thought. The Spirit is an habitual Disposition in the Mind of a Believer, to spiritual Thoughts; according to that their Desire is this, *That the Words of their Mouth, and the Meditation of their Heart, may be acceptable in the Sight of the Lord, their Strength, and their Redeemer* (Psa. 19:14.). And sometimes their Meditations on GOD are *sweet*; their Thoughts of him are *precious* to them; they think of his Loving-kindness with Joy and Delight; contemplate its Nature with holy Admiration; view with Wonder and Astonishment the glorious Designs which were eternally formed in the divine Mind, about such unworthy Creatures as they know themselves to be; and the infinitely wise Methods which were fixed on for the Accomplishment of those Designs. The spiritual Part takes a peculiar Pleasure in thinking of JESUS CHRIST; the Constitution of his Person, who is GOD and Man ineffably united; and therefore is fit to act in the Capacity of Mediator between GOD the Father, and the Church. His Love they meditate upon with the highest Satisfaction, in its Freedom, Greatness, and Perpetuity; and they exercise their Thoughts with Joy and Delight on what He hath done and suffered, in order to save them; the Greatness and Variety of the Benefits which they receive from Him, are the Matter of their most pleasing

Contemplations, viz. Pardon, Peace, Acceptation with GOD, Liberty of Access to Him, and Supplies of Grace to maintain and carry on the good Work which is begun in them. Those Things which engage the constant Attention of holy Angels, and which they *earnestly desire to look into*, the Saints, at some Times, are much conversant about; *The Grace of God, the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory which followed*. And they esteem these Thoughts the best which they ever have, or possibly can have, while they are in this World; and they give it in Charge to their Souls, to be much employed in serious and fixed Meditations on those Things. But, alas! their Thoughts of this kind are very far from being agreeable to the Flesh in them; that is uneasy and restless when the Mind is thus engaged in holy Contemplations. For, as the Spirit in Believers disapproves of vain and unholy Thoughts, so the Flesh in them dislikes holy and spiritual Thoughts, and seeks to eject them out of the Soul; which it too often, effects, by the vain Imagination presenting to View some trifling Object, which through a Want of Caution in the Mind, diverts and turns it off from a continued Attention unto those glorious Things which before it had in Prospect: Thus a melancholy Change takes place in the Frame of a Believer; his spiritual Meditations are marred, to his Surprise, and before he is aware of it; his holy, spiritual Thoughts are succeeded by carnal and vain Thoughts. Thus the Flesh prevails against the Spirit; and that heavenly Joy which the Soul was filled with, while employed in holy Meditation, now subsides and vanishes for the present; that pleasing Sight which the Saint had of CHRIST, the beloved of his Soul, is gone; Darkness overspreads his Mind, in consequence of which he either censures himself for his Folly, in yielding to the Solicitations of his carnal Part, whereby so sad a Change hath taken Place in the Frame of his Soul, or he sinks into Indifferency through the Prevalence of Corruption, and is in a great Measure insensible of, and unaffected with the Loss he hath sustained; a Train of vain Thoughts crowd in and take Possession of the Soul, and prevent the Mind considering duly what a foolish Part it hath acted, to its unspeakable Prejudice; and therefore it falls into a Lethargy, and becomes stupid. It is so busy in acting according to the Dictates of the Flesh, that it is not at Leisure to hearken to the Remonstrances which the Spirit makes against it; they are not heard nor attended to, by reason of that great Advantage which the Flesh hath gained; and thus it may be even with the best.

(2.) The Flesh lusts against, or opposes, Spirit, in Volition. The Will of a Believer, as sanctified, is habitually inclined to Holiness; his Mind

discerns that it is most eligible, because of its Excellency, and his Will, upon that Discernment, exerts itself in an actual Choice of it. But this Choice is not made with the whole Will, because it is not wholly sanctified, but in Part only; and therefore the Will, at no Time, and in no Instance, is entirely engaged in a Desire and Pursuit after Holiness. For there is in the Will a fixed Resistance and Opposition unto what is good; Flesh is seated in the Will as well as Spirit, by reason of which the Spirit hath not, nor can have, a complete Command thereof; it is partly under the Direction of the one, and partly under the Direction of the other. The Flesh dislikes and is Enmity against Holiness, and it endeavors to repress and expel holy Desires which arise from the Spirit. It is not only ever present, and so can immediately exert itself in an Opposition to those holy Volitions which spring up in the Will, as it acts under the Direction of the Spirit; but it is present as a *Law*, the Believer *finds a Law, that when he would do Good, Evil is present with him*. It is coercive, and hath a commanding Force, which too often prevails against the Spirit; hence the holy, spiritual Desires of the Believer abate in their Fervency, and sometimes, for the present, are almost quenched in his Soul. When his Will is thus captivated by the Flesh, Desires of a quite different Nature from those which sprung up in it before, arise therein, and it chooses what is vain and foolish, unto the Gratification of the Flesh, which now hath obtained its End, without which it would not be easy, for it never is, while the Soul acts in a holy and spiritual manner.

The corrupt Part in the Saints fails not to check the Will in the Choice it makes of what is agreeable to the spiritual Part in them, out of that wretched Aversion which it hath to all that is good. It is not only true that the Flesh does not concur with the Spirit in those holy Breathings and Desires which arise from it in the Soul, but it constantly opposes them, and sometimes, with great Violence, and ceases not until it prevails, unto their Expulsion. And innumerable are its Wiles, by which it aims to give a Diversion to the Mind, and draw it off from its Attention to the heavenly Objects about which it is conversant. And if the Flesh prevails upon the Mind to abate of Watchfulness against it, in its Assaults, it will be sure to improve the Advantage it hath gained. Quite different Objects it presents to the Mind, which through its Remissness as to its present Duty, strike it, and possess it of many unprofitable and vain Thoughts. Thus it becomes carnal in its Conceptions; which is followed by carnal Acts in the Will. For Vanity in the Mind, if Entertainment is given to it, will assuredly introduce Carnality in the Will. Spiritual Thoughts are Incentives to

spiritual Desires; and carnal Thoughts, if not immediately expelled out of the Mind, will quench heavenly Desires, and give Rise unto such Volitions in the Will, as are agreeable to the Flesh; for the Acts of the Mind, and the Acts of the Will correspond in their Nature, and are of the same kind; if the Mind acts spiritually in its Thoughts, the Will acts spiritually in its Volitions; but on the contrary, if the Mind acts vainly in its Thoughts, the Will acts vainly in its Volitions; the Reason of which is, the Acts of our Will follow the Acts of our Mind.

(3.) The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, in the Actings of the Affections towards holy Objects. As the Mind discerns the Excellency and Glory of heavenly Things, and the Will makes Choice of them; so the Affections tend towards them according to the Spirit. For, the Mind is not only enlightened, and the Will sanctified, but also the Affections are spiritualized; in consequence of which, they are elevated above the fading, perishing Things of this World, embrace and adhere to Things which are above, *where Christ sitteth, who is even at the right Hand of God.* Invisible Glories, when beheld by Faith, powerfully attract the Affections, and produce the higher Satisfaction and Pleasure, which sanctified Persons, at any Time, experience. They afford a Joy that is *unspeakable and full of Glory.* Nothing can possibly give that sweet and delightful Entertainment to the Saints, which heavenly and unseen Objects do. Grace refines their Affections, and gives them a Relish for far nobler and purer Joys, than can arise from the most delectable Things of this World; they are all of them insipid to the spiritual Taste of the Saints; spiritual Things only are suited to the Nature of the Spirit in them. But the Flesh in Believers is so far from having Pleasure in them, that it is wholly averse to them, and its Aim is to draw off the Affections from them; it entirely disrelishes those heavenly Joys which result from Communion with GOD, and Prospects of his Glory in the Person of CHRIST; and it endeavors to deprive the Soul of that spiritual Pleasure it enjoys while it is conversant about divine Things, and too often it so far prevails, as not only to damp its spiritual Joys, but also to entice the Affections unto an Embrace of carnal Objects, whereby it obtains the End it sought after.

Thus the Flesh lusteth against, or opposes, the Spirit in the Saints; in Thought, Volition, and in the Actings of the Affections towards holy objects.

2. The Spirit lusteth against, or opposes, the Flesh, in Thought, Volition, and in the Acts of the Affections about carnal and evil Objects.

(1.) The Spirit lusteth against, or opposes, the Flesh, in Thought. The carnal Part in a Believer is a constant Source of vain Thoughts, according to that *the Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart is only evil, and that continually*. The Flesh is never quiet and easy but when it is employed in framing vain Imaginations, and therefore a Multitude of unprofitable and sinful Thoughts crowd in upon the Mind. It is *egregious* Folly in us to dissemble in this Matter, for GOD, who searches our Hearts, is perfectly acquainted with all the carnal Conceptions which our sinful Minds form; and if we are awake and capable of reflecting upon our internal Acts, we must be sensible that this is the Facet; and not an Exaggeration of our Vanity and Sinfulness, respecting our Thoughts. The Spirit in the Saints disapproves of, hates, and detests all those Thoughts, which are pleasing to the Flesh in them; it esteems them bold Intruders, and treats them as such; for it is wholly against giving them the least Countenance and Entertainment; that desires their Expulsion; and it endeavors to chase them out of the Mind, as Guests which are most unwelcome and disagreeable unto it; nor can it be easy with their Continuance. But let them be driven out of the Soul ever so often, they will return; because the Flesh, though used with the greatest Severity, and may be compelled to retreat for a short Time, yet it is not put out of Countenance; but with daring Boldness, and great Violence, it quickly re-advances, and assaults the Soul again; the Saints *hate vain Thoughts*, but they cannot possibly get rid of them.

(2.) The Spirit lusteth against, or opposes, the Flesh, in Volition. The Will, according to the Flesh, is inclined to Evil, and averse to Good; and as it acts under its Direction, it refuses the latter, and chooses the former. The Choice which the Flesh makes is agreeable to its Nature, that is sinful, and such is its Choice; unholy Volitions continually spring up in the Will, even of the most sanctified, by Reason it is the Subject of a carnal and corrupt Principle, which always disposes it to Vanity and Folly; for the Flesh is at all Times engaged *in the Service of the Law of Sin*. The Spirit in the Saints disapproves of that evil Choice, which the Flesh causes the Will to make, and solicits it to retract that Choice, and puts it upon making a quite contrary one. As the Flesh never concurs with the Spirit, but opposes it in the Choice of Holiness, so the Spirit never concurs with the Flesh in the Choice of Sin, but opposes it in that Choice. Hence, the Volitions of a Believer, at no Time, are wholly evil, nor wholly good; because the Will in them acts partly under the Direction of the Flesh, and partly under the Direction of the Spirit; both are active Principles in it, and

each hath an Influence upon it; the Flesh moves it to Evil, and the Spirit excites it unto Holiness. Thus the Spirit, in Believers, lusteth against, or opposes, the Flesh, in those evil Volitions which it causes to arise in their Will. Sometimes indeed its Opposition to the Flesh is very strong and powerful, even unto a Predominancy against it; and sometimes its Opposition is feeble, then the Flesh maintains its Ground, increases in its Strength, prevails against the Spirit, and keeps the Will fixed in that sinful Choice which it hath made, and that is followed with sad Effects in the Soul.

(3.) The Spirit lusteth against, or opposes, the Flesh, in the Actings of the Affections about vain and sinful Objects. The Affections, as carnal, do not in the least Degree tend towards heavenly Things, nor are they pleasing to them; holy Thoughts and spiritual Desires are so far from affording Delight to our corrupt Passions, that they often tumultuously endeavor to stifle such Thoughts and Desires in our Souls; there is nothing so vain, unprofitable, and pernicious, but our depraved Affections will embrace and adhere unto, rather than what is sacred; for all their Joy and Delight are in Vanity and Folly; and our vicious Affections have a strong and powerful Influence on our Mind, and our Will, and prevail so far as to banish, for the present, holy Thoughts and heavenly Desires, unto the Gratification of the Flesh. The Spirit in Believers hath no Pleasure in what is agreeable to the Flesh; it dislikes those carnal Joys which that pursues, and is never easy without; and its Aim is, when the Affections are enticed and drawn away after vain Objects by the Flesh, to recall them wandering, and to direct them towards such Objects as are suitable to its own Nature; for the Spirit enjoys no Satisfaction and Pleasure, so long as the Flesh is gratified and entertained in its Dalliances with carnal Objects. Spiritual Things only are the Matter of the Saints Delight, so far as their Affections are spiritualized, and therefore it lusteth against, or opposes, the Flesh, when it seeks to entice and entangle the Affections in order to its Entertainment. And thus the Spirit counteracts and opposes the Flesh in Thought, Volition, and in the Actings of the Affections, about, or towards vain and unlawful Objects; which I am persuaded all Believers find to be true by Experience, though some may be more observant of it than others are.

I would here make two Observations before I pass on.

Observation 1. A Believer hath two Springs of Action in him, one is Evil, and the other Good; the Flesh is Evil, no good Thing dwells in it, nor can

any Thing which is Good be educed out of it; no holy Thoughts, no heavenly Desires, nor spiritual Motions and Tendencies. The Spirit is Good, and is a Spring of holy Thoughts, pure Desires, and spiritual Motions and Tendencies.

Observation 2. The Flesh remains the same after Regeneration as it was before, no Alteration takes Place in its Nature for the better. Sin, which dwells in the Saints, is not less vile and sinful than it heretofore was; the *old Man* is not amended by the Creation of the *new Man*; I hope that none will mistake me on this Subject, I do not say, that the Heart is not made better, for that it certainly is, by the Implantation of a holy Principle in it; but what I say is this, that the Flesh, or in-dwelling Sin, is not made better; its Nature is still what it was, though deprived of its Dominion in the Soul; and therefore the Kind of its Actings is the same, notwithstanding the Presence of Grace; consequently the same sinful Thoughts, unholy Desires, and evil Tendencies, may, and too often do spring from it, which did before Regeneration; and this is matter of great Discouragement unto many holy and humble Persons, who upon their Conversion expected to find it much otherwise; and, therefore, are greatly disappointed.

III. *The Contrariety of the one to the other is to be considered.*

1. They are contrary in their Nature. The Flesh is contrary to the Spirit, that is the Consequence of our Apostasy from GOD, it followed upon our Breach of the Law of our Maker, and as it is the Fruit of Sin, it must be absolutely evil in its Nature, no Good can be in it; the Flesh is not only sinful, but there is an *exceeding Sinfulness in it*, and therefore it must be concluded that it is the direct Opposite of the Spirit; for, the Spirit is the Production of the holy Spirit of GOD, He is the efficient Cause thereof, it is born of him, *that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit*; in its kind, it is *a good and a perfect Gift, which cometh down from above*, so that it is the very Reverse of the Flesh. The Difference between the Flesh, and the Spirit is not this, That the Flesh is *less good* than the Spirit, and the Spirit is *less evil* than the Flesh; but this, the former is wholly evil, and the latter is wholly good, and therefore they are contrary the one to the other, as the Apostle asserts and they are altogether so, not partially, there is no Goodness in the Flesh, nor is there the least Evil in the Spirit; the Flesh, in its Nature, is entirely Evil; and the Spirit, in its Nature, is entirely Good.

2. The Flesh and the Spirit are contrary in their Actings. Each acts agreeable to its own Nature; the Flesh being wholly Evil in its Nature, all

its Acts are entirely so; not partly Evil and partly Good, but they are altogether evil and sinful: And the Spirit being in Its Nature good and holy, all those Acts which spring from *it*, are spiritual and holy. Not that the Souls of Believers, at any Time, or in any Instance, are wholly Evil or wholly Good in acting, for it is in Part only that they are so. The Reason of which is this, they act partly under the Direction of the Flesh, and partly under the Direction of the Spirit, in whatever they do. There contrary Springs of Action, being always resident in them, they are ever influenced by each; hence their Acts are mixed, partly Evil and partly Good. This is not to be understood that Actions which are materially Evil, have any Degree of Goodness an them; or that Actions which are materially Good, have any Degree of Evil in them; but it is to be taken thus, That the Minds of Believers are not wholly Good in holy Actions, by Reason of the Opposition of the Flesh in them to those Actions; nor are they wholly Evil in sinful Actions, by Reason of that Opposition which the Spirit in them makes to those Actions; as the Flesh and the Spirit are directly contrary in their Nature, they certainly are so in acting; the Flesh concurs not with the Spirit in its Acts, nor does the Spirit concur with the Flesh in its Acts; a Believer, *with his Mind serves the law of God, but with his Flesh he serves the Law of Sin.*

IV. *The Conclusion, or Inference arising from thence is this, viz. Believers cannot do the Things that they would.*

1. With Respect to Good. The Aim and Desire of a Saint, according to the Spirit, is to be all Conformity to the holy Law of GOD; but the continual Presence of the Flesh renders it impossible, even when that acts most vigorously in him; for the Flesh fails not to lust against, and oppose it. Sometimes a Believer retires, and proposes to exercise himself in Reading, serious Meditation and Prayer, and therein to enjoy delightful Communion with GOD and a dear Redeemer. But, alas! the Flesh in him bestirs itself, and rises up with Violence against the Spirit in this holy Design, which it hath formed in the Mind; whereupon a sad Disappointment ensues, Confusion and Distraction take place in his Thoughts, his spiritual Desires abate in their Fervency, and his Affections rove, and are ready to embrace any vain Object, which the carnal Imagination presents unto them; whereby he is prevented acting in that holy and spiritual manner which he intended and desired; through the present Prevalency of the Flesh, in him, against the Spirit, he immediately becomes indisposed to those holy Exercises which it was his Intention and

Desire to be delightfully employed in; and thus, I am persuaded, it may at some Times be, even with the best, for *the Law of Sin, which is in the Members, and wars against the Law of the Mind*, in some Instances, there is Reason to think, gains Advantage over the spiritual Part, in all the Saints.

2. Believers cannot do that which they would with Regard to Evil. The Flesh in them, being entirely sinful in its Nature, all its Projects and Contrivances are so; it always aims at the utmost Gratification of its corrupt Desires, and is for bringing the whole Soul in Subjection to itself, the Mind, the Will, and the Affections; it endeavors to possess the Mind of vain Thoughts, it solicits the Will to choose what is unprofitable and evil, and it labors to entice and entangle the Affections, to place and keep them fixed on carnal Objects; and many Times, through its Violence, or its Artifice and Cunning, it prevails very far; at which, the Spirit in Believers is alarmed, and rises up in Opposition unto this Prevalency of the Flesh, for that cannot bear with it. The spiritual Part reproves the Mind for its Inattention to the Design of the Flesh, whereby vain Thoughts got Possession of it; the Will for its Carnality, by Means whereof evil Volitions sprung up in it; the Affections for their Folly in wandering at the Instigation of the Flesh; and thus while that is busily employed in acting its vile Part, the Spirit remonstrates against it, checks and controls it, and in a great Measure, for the present, prevents it from making farther Progress in the Soul. And, therefore, as Believers cannot do the Things that they would, according to the Spirit, by Reason of the Opposition of the Flesh; so they cannot do the Things that they would, according to the Flesh, because of the Opposition of the Spirit; and thus it will be With them, so long as they continue in this imperfect State.

I shall close the Discourse with some Observations.

Observation 1. Evil is in the whole Mind, or our whole intellectual Nature is the Subject of Sin. No Faculty in us is free from that moral Contagion, in the Understanding it is Darkness, or an Incapacity to form a true Judgment of spiritual Things; in the Will it is a Disinclination to what is holy, and a constant, fixed Propensity to what is vain and sinful; in the Affections it is a Dislike of what is spiritual, and Pleasure in what is carnal; and thus it is, even in all regenerate Persons. For Regeneration effects no Change for the better in the Nature of the Flesh, that still remains what it was, only it hath lost its Dominion by the Production of its contrary in the Soul, which reigns in Opposition to it; but that

notwithstanding, it is resident as an active Principle in all the Powers of the Mind, and they are under its Influence.

Observation 2. Good is in the whole Heart of a regenerate Person. Every Faculty is the Subject of Grace; there is Light in the Understanding, which is an Ability to discern spiritual Things in their Excellency and Glory; Holiness is seated in the Will, by which it is disposed to avoid Evil, and inclined to the Choice of what is Good; the Affections are spiritualized, in Consequence whereof Sin becomes the Object of their Aversion, and Holiness of their Pleasure and Delight. Thus Evil and Good are in the whole Soul of a regenerate Man.

Observation 3. The Heart of a Believer is not wholly Evil, nor wholly Good, it is each in Part; and therefore he differs from Angels, the Spirits of just Men made perfect, from Devils, and from unregenerate Men. Angels are all Purity and Perfection, absolutely free from Evil, and are infective in their Acts of Obedience to the divine Will. The Spirits of just Men departed have no Impurity attending them, those corrupt Habits which they were the Subjects of in this State, are entirely eradicated, and they are made perfectly like unto JESUS CHRIST; they are so holy as to be without all Cause of *Blame before God in Love*. Devils are altogether sinful, they have not the least Degree of Holiness in them; and unregenerate Men are Flesh only, they have nothing of Spirituality in them, their Hearts are entirely carnal and sinful. Believers are the Subjects of Flesh and Spirit, of Sin and Holiness, and therefore their Hearts are neither wholly Evil nor wholly Good, but are both in Part, because contrary jarring Springs of Action are seared in their whole Souls, which have a contrary Influence on the Mind, the Will, and the Affections; so that they do not really act under the Direction either of the Flesh or the Spirit, which are in them, but partly under the Direction of the one, and partly under the Direction of the other; consequently they are neither wholly Evil, nor wholly Good, but each in Part, and have such a Combat within themselves, between Flesh and Spirit, as no others have.

Observation 4. There is in Believers a Principle of Holiness, by which I understand a Capacity and Disposition in the Mind of acting in a holy, spiritual manner. In the Understanding it is a spiritual, visive Ability to discern heavenly Things, and therefore it is Light subjective, which enables him, in whom it is, to perceive the true Nature of Light objective, legal, and evangelical. This Principle in the Will, is a Disposition and Power to choose what is holy, and to refuse what is evil. In the Affections,

it is Spirituality, and a Suitableness to the Nature of divine Things, whereby they are caused to tend towards, and take Pleasure in them. This is what is meant by the *Heart of Flesh*, the Opposite of the *Heart of Stone*; the *new Heart*, the *new Spirit*; the *new Man*, which is the Contrary of the *old Man*; it is the *Law of the Mind*, against which *the Law in the Members wars*; it is the *Mind which serves the Law of God*, the direct Opposite of *the Flesh*, which *serves the Law of Sin*. Hence it is clear, that there are in Believers two contrary Principles, or Springs of Action, one is good, and the other is evil; one is holy, and the other is sinful; and the Acts of the one are contrary to the Acts of the other. With no Propriety can it be said that the evil Principle is Error, or false Doctrine in the Mind, though by Reason of that Principle, the Mind forms an erroneous Judgment concerning Truth. Nor can it with the least Propriety be said, that the good Principle in the Mind is Truth, though by Means of that Principle it discerns Truth, and approves of it. Some of late seem to apprehend, that there is not, in the Souls of Believers, a holy Principle distinct from the Word, that is to say evangelical Truth, but that, if there is what may be called a Principle of Holiness in them, it is the Word, or evangelical Truth itself. This is a fond Imagination, which is fully evinced by several Things, one is this; The Spirit, or Principle of Holiness, in the Saints, is born and ingenerated of the holy Spirit, *That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit*. Now it is ridiculous to think, that the Word is born of the Spirit of GOD, in the Saints. It was revealed and dictated by him to the Prophets and Apostles, and by him it is opened and applied to the Souls of Believers, for their Instruction and Consolation; but born of him in them it is not, nor can be. Again, the Principle of Holiness in the Saints, is a new Creation, for they are the Workmanship of GOD created in CHRIST JESUS; on which Account they are denominated new Creatures: *If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature*. It is a *monstrous Figment* to imagine, that evangelical Truth is created in the Saints. As was said before, it is revealed and applied to them, but created in them it is not. Farther, the spiritual Principle discerns Truth, but the Truth itself it cannot be; for if so, that which discerns, and that which is discerned, must be the same, which they cannot be. How is it possible, that the Object discerned, should be the same with that which discerns it? Besides, this holy Principle receives *the Things of the Spirit of God*, which Things are evangelical Truths. The Things received, are distinct from that which receives them; and therefore the Word is not that Principle of Holiness which is in Believers, but distinct from it; the Word of Truth is that upon which the

spiritual Principle acts, by which it is nourished, strengthened, and invigorated, and, consequently, at cannot be that Principle itself.

A mere Whiffler in Reasoning hath misrepresented Dr Owen on this Subject, who expresses himself thus, in treating on the Efficiency of the Word, as the Instrument of GOD, in the Communication of Salvation to us. In the Regeneration and Sanctification of the Elect, the first external Act of this Salvation, this is wrought by the Word, 1Pe. 1:23. We are born again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of GOD; wherein not only the Thing itself, of our Regeneration by the Word, but the manner of it also is declared. It is by the Collation of a new spiritual Life upon us, whereof the Word is the Seed. As every Life proceeds from same Seed, that hath in itself virtually the whole Life to be educed from it by natural Ways and Means, so the Word in the Hearts of Men is turned into a vital Principle, that cherished by suitable Means puts forth vital Acts and Operations. By this Means we are born of God, and quickened, who by Nature are Children of Wrath, dead in Trespasses and Sin. So Paul tells the Corinthians, that he had begotten them in Jesus Christ by the Gospel. I confess it doth not do this Work by any Power resident in itself, and always necessarily accompanying its Administration; for then all would be so regenerated unto whom it is preached, and there could be no Neglecters of it. But it is the Instrument of God for this End, and mighty powerful of God it is for the Accomplishment of it. And this gives us our first real Interest in the Salvation it doth declare. Of the same Use and Efficacy is it in the Progress of this Work in our Sanctification, by which we are carried on towards the full Enjoyment of this Salvation. So our Savior prays for his Disciples, (Joh. 17:19.) Sanctify them by thy Word, as the Means and Instrument of their Sanctification. And he tells his Apostles, that they were clean through the Word that he had spoken unto them, (Joh. 15: 3.) for it is the Food and Nourishment whereby the spiritual Principle of Life, which we receive in our Regeneration, is cherished and increased, (1Pe. 2: 2.) and so able to build us up until it give us an Inheritance among them that are sanctified^{f1}. Upon which Discourse this Whiffler remarks thus; Here we have Dr Owen against Dr Owen, What are we to do in this Case? whiffle after him? no, but reduce him to a mere Neutral, and allow him no Vote^{f2}. But how does it appear that the Doctor contradicts himself, which is a Reason why he should be allowed no Vote on this subject? Answer thus: The Doctor elsewhere says, I call this Principle of Holiness an Habit, not as though it were absolutely of the same Kind with acquired Habits, and would in all Things

answer unto our Conceptions and Descriptions of them: But we only call it so, because in its Effects and manner of Operations it agreeth in sundry Things with acquired, intellectual, or moral Habits. But it hath much more Conformity unto a natural, unchangable Instinct, than unto any acquired Habit. Wherefore God chargeth it on Men, that in their Obedience unto him, they did not answer that Instinct which is in other Creatures towards their Lords and Benefactors, (Isa. 1: 3.) and which they cordially observe, (Jer. 8: 7). But herein GOD teacheth us more than the Beasts of the Earth, and maketh us wiser than the Fowls of Heaven, (Job. 35:11.). This therefore is that which I intend, a Virtue, a Power, a Principle of spiritual Life and Grace, wrought, created, infused into our Souls, and inlaid in all the Faculties of them, constantly abiding and unchangeably residing in them, which is antecedent unto, and the next Cause of all Acts of true Holiness whatever^{f3} There is not the least Appearance of Contradiction in what the Doctor advances, for he asserts, in each Place, that there is a vital, spiritual Principle in the Regenerate. So far, therefore, there is no Contradiction, but a perfect Agreement. In the former Place he observes, that the Word, or Gospel, in a Way of Efficiency, begets, or produces that vital, spiritual Principle, not that the Word *materially* is that Principle. He was no such *Blunderer*, to imagine that the Word is that which it effects in Men, he well knew it to be distinct therefrom; and that Efficiency, which he ascribes to his Word, is not the Efficiency of an Agent; but of an Instrument, or Mean, used by GOD in the Regeneration of his People; and in their Sanctification, as the vital, spiritual Principle in them is nourished and increased by it. Affirming that the Word is a Mean, or Instrument, used in producing the vital, spiritual Principle, is so far from supposing that it is that Principle, that it most clearly implies, that it is distinct from it; for no Mean, or Instrument, can possibly be that, which it is the Mean, or Instrument, of effecting. The Doctor, therefore, is not to be reduced to a Neutral on this Subject, and denied the Right of a Vote upon it, which this *Trifler* in Reasoning is desirous of. It is much to be lamented, that any among us should call into Question the important Truth, that there is a Principle of Holiness in Believers; but with Cheerfulness we engage in its Defence. May the Lord of his infinite Mercy give us satisfactory Evidence, that we are the happy Subjects of such a Principle! and by his Spirit and Grace increase the Vigour of it in our Souls!



FOOTNOTES

^{ft1} Rational Religion, on *Hebrews*, Vol. I. Page 178.

^{ft2} Rational Religion, etc.

^{ft3} On the Spirit, Page 416.