

LETTER X.

DEAR SIR.

I AM now come to the SIXTH PROPOSITION, which is expressed in these words, “*Seeing other graces, or spiritual dispositions, with which salvation is connected, are represented as the duties of men in general; there is no reason why faith should not be the same*.*”

Here Mr. F. proceeds to determine the meaning of spiritual acts, and spiritual dispositions, and says, “the scripture appears to me by the term *spiritual*, when applied to the dispositions of the mind, to mean *truly holy*, as opposed to *carnal*.” and further adds, “whenever applied to the dispositions of the mind; *spiritual* stands opposed to *carnal*; and that in the *criminal* sense of the word †.” Here is a mistake, for *spiritual* in 1 Cor. 2. 14. is opposed to *natural*. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, &c. why? because they are spiritually discerned.” That passage has been largely considered in Letter 8. Mr. F. says further, “It appears to me that the scripture knows nothing of *natural* holiness as distinguished from *spiritual* holiness. That it knows but of one kind of *real* holiness, and that is conformity to the holy law of God.”

That there is a difference between *natural* and *spiritual* holiness, I think a little consideration will evince. *Natural holiness* was what Adam possessed in paradise, it was what he was created with, it was his very nature, and, had he stood, the same holi-

ness would have been conveyed by natural generation to his posterity: not so *spiritual holiness*. It is natural to no man; it never was; it is far above nature; it flows from union to Christ; and the immediate efficacious and distinguishing operations of the holy spirit on the heart, whereby the sinner is brought into a glorious conformity to the image of the son of God, to which he was predestinated, 1 Cor. 1. 30. 2 Cor. 3. 18. Rom. 8. 29.—*Natural holiness* consists in a conformity to the holy law of God. *Spiritual holiness* consists in a conformity to the law and gospel too: natural holiness was liable to be lost, and was lost.—But spiritual holiness never was liable to be, never was, never can be lost.—natural holiness might have been, and would have been conveyed by natural generation, to the posterity of Adam, had he stood: not so spiritual holiness.

I cannot help quoting here a few passages from Dr. Owen’s excellent discourse on the Holy Spirit, who sets this matter in a much clearer light than I am capable of. “It is alledged (says he) that religion before the entrance of sin and under the gospel is one and the same, and therefore there is no difference between the duties of obedience required in the one and the other: And it is true that they are so far the same, as that they have the same author, the same object, the same end, and so also had the religion under the law, which was therefore so far the same with them. But that they are the same as to all the acts of our obedience, and the manner of their performance, is a vain imagination. Is there no alteration made in religion by the *interposition* of the person of Christ to be incarnate, and his mediation? no augmentation of the object of faith? no change in the abolishing of the old covenant, and the establishment of the new; the covenant between God and man being that which gives the

“ especial form and kind unto religion ; the measure and denomination of it ? no alterations in the principles, aids, assistances, and whole nature of our obedience unto God ? The whole mystery of godliness must be renounced, if we intend to give way unto such imaginations*.”

He observes again, “ that which principally differenceth *evangelical holiness*, with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ, from all other *natural* or *moral* habits or duties, and whereby he is made sanctification unto us, is, that from him, his person as our head, the principle of *spiritual* life and holiness in believers is derived ; and by virtue of their union with him, real supplies of spiritual strength and grace, whereby their holiness is preserved, maintained, and increased, are constantly communicated unto them †.”—And further speaking of Christ as being made unto us sanctification, he says “ He is so, because the rule and measure of holiness unto us, the instrument of working it in us, is his word and doctrine, which he taught the church as the great prophet of it. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The inbred dictates of the light and law of nature, in their greatest purity, are not the rule or measure of this holiness ; much less are these rules and maxims, which men deduce, partly right, and partly wrong from them, of any such use ; nor is the written law itself so. It is the rule of original holiness, but not the adequate rule of that holiness, whereunto we are restored by Christ ; neither are both these in conjunction, the dictates of nature, and the law written, the instrument of working holiness in us : but it is the doctrine of the gospel, which is the adequate rule and immediate instrument of it †.”

* Owen on spirit, p. 461. † Ib. p. 450. ‡ Ib. p. 445.

I shall add no more on this head, especially as Mr. F. soon gives it up, by saying, “ If this (that is the distinction between natural and spiritual holiness) however plain it may appear to me, should not be universally allowed, I may go upon a more undisputed ground*.” And what ground is this ? why says Mr. F. “ The criterion by which I shall all along judge of what are spiritual dispositions, will be their having the promise of spiritual blessings. Whether these dispositions be incumbent on carnal men ; let us now enquire †.” Mr. F. has before given us his idea of spiritual dispositions : he says they are *truly holy*, as opposed to carnal, p. 80.

But I think this is not a sufficient definition of them ; as a person may have truly holy dispositions, and yet not spiritual ones ; I mean *evangelically spiritual*. For instance, Adam in a state of innocence, had truly holy dispositions ; he loved, feared, and worshipped God, and his disposition so to do was truly holy ; yet not *evangelically spiritual*. In a sense indeed they were spiritual, as the object he so loved, feared, and adored was God, who is a spirit ; and as they were dispositions created in his holy soul, yet at the same time, they were not spiritual in a gospel sense.—What then, you will say, do you mean by spiritual dispositions ? I answer, such dispositions as are the consequence of spiritual life, infused into the soul, which life (to use the words of another) “ as unto the special nature of it, is specified and discerned from a life of any other kind, in that the fulness of it is communicated to the Lord Jesus Christ as mediator. Col. 1. 19. And from his fulness we do receive it, John 1. 16. and the fountain of this life being in God, and the fulness of it laid up in Christ Jesus for us : he communicates the power

* p. 81. † 1618

“ and principle of it unto us, by the Holy Ghost.
 “ *Rom.* 8. 11. But yet he doth it so, as to derive
 “ it unto us from Jesus Christ. *Eph.* 4. 15, 16.
 “ For he is the life, and without him or power
 “ communicated from him, we can do nothing.
 “ *John* 15. 5*.” Such a life had not Adam, and
 consequently had not the dispositions which accom-
 pany that life, nor could he perform those acts
 which such a life, and such dispositions, must ne-
 cessarily precede. This is a life, and these are
 dispositions which flow only from sovereign grace
 and new covenant love, and are designed for, and
 given only to the elect.

In order to prove spiritual dispositions are incum-
 bent on carnal men it is observed “ the law is ex-
 “ pressly said to be spiritual †.” This is true, and
 Dr. Gill in the words quoted by Mr. F. gives us
 the reason why it may be called so, *viz.* “ because
 “ it comes from the spirit of God, and reaches to
 “ the spirit of man; it requires truth in the in-
 “ ward parts; spiritual service and obedience,
 “ &c.”—These last words *spiritual service and obedi-
 ence*, Mr. F. has put in capitals, because I suppose
 he imagines this sentence expresses his own senti-
 ments; but he is mistaken, for the Doctor after-
 wards explains what he means by the law, requir-
 ing *spiritual service and obedience*, *viz.* “ a serving
 “ it with our minds; a worshipping God in spirit
 “ and in truth, a loving him with all our hearts
 “ and souls, as well as a performance of all the
 “ outward acts of religion and duty †.” The Doc-
 tor does not mean by this expression, that the law
 requires those spiritual principles, dispositions, and
 acts, which flow from a spiritual life from Christ
 Jesus, being infused into the soul. He tells us
 plainly what are his ideas respecting the law’s re-
 quiring faith in answer to this question, “ whe-

* Owen on spirit, B. 3. ch. 4. † P. 32. ‡ Exposit. on Rom. 7. 14.

then

“ ther faith is a duty of the moral law, or is it to
 “ be referred to the gospel?”—To which he re-
 plies, “ that as the law, is not of faith, so faith is
 “ not of the law. There is a faith indeed, which
 “ the law requires, and obliges to, namely, faith
 “ and trust in God, as the God of nature and pro-
 “ vidence: for as both the law of nature, and the
 “ law of Moses, shew there is a God, and who is
 “ to be worshipped, they both require a belief of
 “ him, and trust and confidence in him, which is
 “ one part of the worship of him enjoined therein:
 “ moreover, the law obliges men to give credit to
 “ any revelation of the mind and will of God he
 “ has made, or should think fit to make unto them
 “ at any time; but as for special faith in Christ as
 “ a Saviour, or a believing in him to the saving of
 “ the soul, this the law knows nothing of, nor
 “ does it make it known. This kind of faith
 “ neither comes by the ministrations of it, nor does
 “ it direct to Christ, the object of it, nor give
 “ any encouragement to believe in him on the
 “ above account*.”

That the law is spiritual, as it reaches the spirit,
 and requires of man love to God with all his heart,
 soul, and spirit, is granted; and so far as man
 drops short of the requirements of the moral law,
 he is brought under condemnation. And this may
 serve as an answer to Mr. F.’s questions in p. 84.
 “ Is any internal religion now required of men
 “ towards God, or is it not? are they obliged to
 “ worship God with their bodies only? and is it
 “ right that their hearts should be far from him?”
 I reply, the law requires the heart, it calls for sin-
 cerity and truth; and therefore hypocrisy and pre-
 tence cannot be right: nay, such service is con-
 demned by the law. But what are these quota-
 tions to the purpose? why, it is asked “ wherein

‘ do these dispositions differ from those which are “spiritually good †?” I have already answered this, and I say again, those dispositions which are spiritually good, are what flow from a spiritual life infused into the soul; which life is derived from Christ, and is communicated by the Holy Ghost. Such a life, man has not by nature, such a life man never had in innocence; and therefore such dispositions cannot be required of him. These dispositions the law does not demand; they are only what the gospel bestows, or, in other words, what the spirit through the gospel communicates. The apostle in *Rom. 7. 6.* says “but now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in *newness of spirit*, and not in the *oldness of the letter*.”

Now if, as Mr. F. asserts, the same spiritual good dispositions which are bestowed by the gospel, are required by the law, and are incumbent on men in general, * there is no propriety in Paul’s words; for according to this, when these dispositions are bestowed on a man, he does but act as he originally acted; he does only what the law requires, and consequently serves in the *oldness of the letter*. According to Mr. F. there is “no alteration made in religion, by the interposition of the person of Christ, to be incarnate and his mediation: no change in the abolishing of the old covenant, and the establishment of the new: no alteration in the nature of our obedience:” which seems very contrary to the inspired writer, who expressly says of himself and other believers, “we serve in *newness of spirit*, and not in the *oldness of the letter*.”

On the whole, if spiritual dispositions, which lead to spiritual obedience, differ from *natural* and *truly holy* dispositions, and were what Adam

never had (as I shall endeavour more clearly to shew by and by) nor what the law requires, and are what no man would ever have possessed, had it not been for the undertaking of Christ, and work of the Holy Spirit, who bestows them in a way of sovereign and distinguishing grace on the elect only, I conclude they are not incumbent on unregenerate men, nor are they any where represented as the duties of men in general; and consequently there is no reason to assert that *special faith* is required of all men.

I conclude at present, wishing Mr. Fuller, you, and myself may be at last found partakers of that spiritual life, and those spiritual dispositions, which flow from the glorious fulness of Christ, and by which the church itself becomes the fulness of him that filleth all in all. *Eph. 1. 23.*

I remain

Yours,