The second general Proposition that was observed from this parable was that {true and false Christians do in some things agree, and in others they greatly differ}.

We have already considered wherein they agree. I come now, in the Second place, to consider wherein they differ. And those things wherein they differ, may be referred to these three heads:

1. [Their] radical difference consists [in that, that] the one have oil in their vessels, and the other have none.

2. There appears a great difference between them, in those things that are the consequence of this radical difference.

3. They greatly differ in their general character, that is manifest from the consideration of both the foregoing.

But in the

[1.] First place, their most essential difference lies in that, that the one have oil in their vessels, and the others have none. It has been already shown how they agree, in that both have lamps. It has been shown how they agree in their profession of Christianity, and in attending the same external duties of religion, and being of the same visible society, and in that they both seek and hope to go to heaven.

And [it has been shown] that false Christians, as well as true, may make profession of experience of a work of conversion, and may indeed have many religious affections.

They may have great religious affections of sorrow, and may have great affections of gratitude, and may be much affected in reading and hearing of the great things that Christ did and suffered, and may be affected in hearing the gospel preached, and may love to hear the Word preached; it may be
pleasant to them, yea, they may be lifted up and carried away with admiration of sermons that they hear.

They may have an affection of zeal against sin and error. They may have affections of praise, may have a disposition to praise God, and may be very much affected with some great and extraordinary work of God that they see, and their hearts may be lifted up with it.

And [they may] may in many things be exceeding strict and exact, and may have a strong hope and confidence of their good estate, and may be received into the charity and good opinion of those that are true Christians.

Thus, they may agree in their lamps. But let ‘em agree never so much in these respects, let the foolish virgins have never so flaming lamps, yet herein there will forever remain a great difference in this respect, viz., that true Christians have oil in their vessels, whereas false Christians have none.

The difference between true Christians and false is not gradual. It don’t consist in that, that false Christians have but little oil in their vessels, and true Christians have a great deal; but in that, that true Christians have oil and false have none. Not the least drop of oil is there in the vessels of the foolish virgins.

This OIL in the vessels of true Christians may be thus described:’
‘Tis a spiritual and abiding principle in their hearts, that may be said to be a new nature in their souls, consisting in the Christian spirit that they are of.

Whatever profession false Christians may make, and whatever affections they may have, and whatever strong and confident hope they may entertain, this is what they have none of.

This principle, this nature and this spirit, that has now been spoken of, is the proper fullness of the soul, whereby it partakes of Christ’s fullness. But souls or vessels of false Christians have none of this
fullness, but are empty, and their hearts hollow.

This is as it were the substance by which God’s wheat differs from chaff. There seems to reference to this in Is. 6:13, “But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and be eaten as a tei tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.” By this, true Christians differ from false, as a sound tree differs from one that is hollow and rotten.

This is that seed that remaineth in them, that are born of God. This is that “good thing” that is in God’s people “towards the Lord God of Israel.” I Kgs. 14:13, “In him only of all the house of Jeroboam is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.”

This is that “one thing needful” that Christ speaks of, Luke 10:42. This is that substance and weight and purity, wherein silver and gold differ from shining dross; and this is the substance and a sweetness, wherein fruit differs from flowers and leaves.

This is that root in themselves, wherein the seed growing in good ground differs from that which grows up in stony ground, Matt. 13:21. This is the “good treasure in the heart,” spoken of, Matt. 12:35.

But this great difference between true and false Christians may be more fully and clearly explained, by considering distinctly the several things contained in it. And therefore [I will] show:

(1) [It is a] principle in [the] heart.
(2) [This is a] spiritual principle [in the heart].
(3) [It is an] abiding [principle].
(4) [It is a] new nature [in the soul].
(5) [It consists in the Christian] spirit they are of.

(1) It is a principle in the heart. The vessel that this oil is contained in, is the heart. The main and most essential difference between
true Christians and false, is inward, in the hidden man of the heart, and
don’t consist in anything external.

Nor does it consist in any natural knowledge that true Christians have
got in their heads more than others, but in the excellent principle they have
in their hearts. Man looks on the entire appearance, but God looks on the
heart; that is what he especially requires. Prov. 23:26, “My son, give me
thine heart.” True Christians do give their hearts to God; they have their
hearts drawn. The change that is wrought in a true Christian, is no
superficial thing; it consists in no flashy affections that make transient
impressions only: but what is wrought and experienced in the soul of a true
Christian is inward, and digs and reaches the bottom of his heart.

Whatever strong impressions false Christians may have made upon their
imagination, and however greatly their affections may be moved, so as to
cause tears or great joy and admiration, and a high conceit of themselves,
yet their hearts ben’t reached. Their impressions don’t come to the bottom of
their hearts, nor do their affections come from thence: they leave the heart
as it was.

’Tis a great gospel privilege and blessing to have a change of heart,
to have the stony heart taken away, and an heart of flesh given. Ezek.
11:19, “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within
you, and I will take the stony heart out of the flesh, and will give them an
heart of flesh.”

(2) This is a spiritual principle in the heart. There may be moral
principles in men that are not spiritual principles. A man may be of a just
principle, and he may be of a generous principle, he may be of a neighborly
principle, and not be of a spiritual principle.

The epithet of “spiritual” is often used in the New Testament as
distinguishing of true Christian grace from all that appearance of value that
may be in unregenerate men. Gal 6:1, “Ye which are spiritual, restore such a
man in the spirit of meekness.” Col. 1:19, “Hath filled us with all wisdom, and spiritual understanding.” Rom. 8:6, “To be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

Here, some may be ready to inquire, What is meant, when it is said that this principle is spiritual? We have often heard the term, but what is the import of the expression, and how is that which is truly spiritual nature, distinguished from that which is merely moral? I answer,

1. This principle is not called “spiritual,” chiefly because the seat of it is in the soul or spirit of a man, and not in his body. A great many other things have their seat in the soul, and there only, that ben’t spiritual, in the sense of the New Testament. So is the understanding or knowledge of a natural man; it has its seat as much in the soul, as the understanding of a godly man. But yet we find spiritual understanding distinguished from their understanding. All men’s idea or thoughts are seated in the soul, or in that part of man which is a spirit, and not in the body; but yet, all ben’t spiritual. Nor,

2. Is it called “spirit,” because it is conversant about those things that are immaterial and not corporeal. So are many things in natural men. Natural men may have reasonings about the nature of the soul, and about the nature of other spiritual beings. They may have a great deal of knowledge, not only about natural bodies, but also about the nature of spirit. But yet these reasonings and this knowledge, mayn’t be spiritual, in the language of the New Testament. But,

3. Affirmatively, this principle is termed “spirit” because of the original and principle of it, viz. the Spirit of God.

’Tis hence the term is derived, as it is used in the New Testament. The word “spirit” has not respect to the spirit of man, that is the seat of what is spiritual, nor with respect to spiritual substance, that is the object of
God; but with respect to the Spirit of God, that is the author, original and principle of it.

Thus Christians are termed “spiritual” persons, because they are born of the Spirit, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in them; and things are called “spiritual” because they relate to the Spirit of God. As is evident by I Cor. 2:13-14, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Here the Apostle explains himself, that by “spiritual things,” he means things of the Spirit of God, and things which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

So Eph. 5:18-19, “be ye filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” The songs are called spiritual, as proceeding from the Spirit they are filled with. So Rom. 8:6, “to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Here, to be “carnally minded,” is opposed to being carnally or fleshly minded. And now, let this be compared with the next verse but two: “but ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you.” Here you see that that which is spiritual, is opposed to carnal or fleshly, as it related to the Spirit of God.

And so it is that that principle, which is in the hearts of the godly, is a spiritual principle, viz. as the Spirit of God is the source of it, and as it is of the nature of that Spirit. Which probably is one reason why it is compared to oil in the parable we are upon.

Oil is the most common and useful type of the Spirit of God of any in the Scripture. So was the oil with which the priests and other persons and things were anointed: anointing them with oil, signified sanctifying them
with the Spirit of God. So Christ is said to be anointed with oil, as he had
the Spirit of God poured out upon him. [Ps.] 89:20, “I have found David my
servant, and with my holy oil have I anointed.” Ps. 45:7, “Thou livest
righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed
thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

So all true Christians are said to receive an anointing, as they have
the grace of the Spirit of God in their hearts. I John 3:27, “But the
anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that
any man teach you. But as the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is
truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you ye shall abide in him.”

So here this principle in the heart is called “oil” in the parable--
doubtless the same as {the} oil in [the] candlesticks, Zech. 4:2-3--because
‘tis a spiritual principle. And it is so, in three respects:

a. ‘Tis a principle that is not from nature, but is wrought in the
heart wholly by the Spirit of God. That which [is] spiritual is supernatural,
or above nature; and therefore, we find what is spiritual, and what is not,
set in contradistinction, the one to the other, in Scripture. I Cor. [2:]14-
15, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they
are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are
spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things.”

So that this principle in the heart that we are speaking of, is no
principle that is naturally there, and so is distinguished from those
ingenuous dispositions of nature, that some have more than others. Some, by
their natural disposition and constitution, are more disposed to some moral
virtues than others, but such principles are not spiritual.

This that is in the hearts of the godly, which they are distinguished
[by], is nothing that arises from the working of natural principles, such as
self-love, natural fear, natural gratitude, [or] natural admiration of
something extraordinary, as the affections of false Christians do.
Nor is it wrought in the heart by any natural power or strength of their own reason, or any of their natural faculties, or by the strength of their endeavors, or from the natural strength of others.

So that this principle is distinguished from all moral principles, that come merely by a sober and virtuous education.

But it is of His infusing. Hence the apostle John says, godly persons "are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John 1:13. They have "received an unction from the holy One," I John 2:20.

Nor is it only from the operation of the Spirit, as assisting and working on men's natural principles, such as their self-love and natural conscience; but it is from the Spirit infusing a new and divine principle.

'Tis not only a natural principle, stirred up and set to work by God's Spirit, as men's natural conscience is stirred up by the Spirit under legal awakenings and convictions: but 'tis from the creating power of the Spirit of God, giving a new heart, infusing a new principle; a principle quite above natural self-love, natural fear and natural gratitude, natural conscience; something heavenly, something of God. Herein, this differs from common illuminations, superior to all that is born of the flesh.

The principle itself, as well as the exercise of it, is from the Spirit of God by the new birth; as is evident by its being represented as a seed implanted in the heart in the new birth, I John 3:9.

This is a principle of spiritual life and action that is from Christ, and is the same with that living water that Christ speaks of, John 4:14.

b. 'Tis a spiritual principle, not only as 'tis at first infused by the Spirit of God, but it is continually from the Spirit of God, dwelling as a spring of life in the soul. It is at first immediately from the Spirit of God, and 'tis always immediately from the Spirit; 'tis always from something above nature.
Much as the water that is in the stream continually is coming from the fountain, and if the communication with the fountain should be cut off, the stream would immediately fail. And as the light is from the sun, not only at the sun’s first rising, but it is immediately from the sun all the day long whenever it shines, and if at any time a cloud intervenes to hide the sun, the shining ceases.

The Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of the saints, as we are told that they are “the temples of the Holy Ghost” [I Cor. 6:19].

When once the Spirit of God is given to work this divine principle, the same always abides there. John 14:16, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” (And the) latter end of [v.] 17, “but ye know him, for he dwelleth in you,” and shall be in you.

And therefore, a true Christian, in having grace dwelling in him, is said to have God dwelling in him. I John 4:16, “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

And God, as he dwells in the hearts of the saints, don’t remain there inactive and motionless; and therefore he is said not only to dwell in them, but to walk in them. II Cor. 6:16, “For ye are the temple of the living God as God hath said I will dwell in them, and walk in them.”

Christ is in them by his Spirit, but he is not in them as one dead, but he lives in them. Gal 2:20, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

And grace is maintained in the heart of a saint, no otherwise than as life is maintained in the branch of a tree, viz., by sap continually coming from the tree; so that if the branch be severed from the stock, it dies.

Herein this principle differs from all that is experienced by natural men. Natural men may have that which is from the Spirit of God. He may have convictions and common illuminations that are from thence, but not as an indwelling spring of life in the soul. The Spirit of God never took up his
abode in their hearts, or united himself so to them, as to become a principle of action in them.

They don’t feel the Spirit of God acting in them as a full principle of operation in their hearts, as the godly do; and therefore having the spirit of Christ is mentioned in Scripture as that which distinguishes those that are Christ’s. Rom. 8:9, “But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.”

c. This principle is a spiritual principle, as the Spirit of God therein exerts and manifests his own proper nature. ‘Tis a spiritual principle, not only as the Spirit of God is the author of it, and the constant spring of it; but as the nature of the Spirit of God appears in the nature of this principle.

This principle, and the Spirit of God, agree in their nature and tendency, and so it is of a spiritual nature.

Hence Christ says, “whatsoever is born of the Spirit is spirit,” John 3:6. He don’t mean whatsoever is born of the Spirit, is [the] spirit of a man and not his body, but whatsoever is born of the spirit is something of the same nature as that Spirit that it is born of, viz., a spiritual nature, after the same manner as that which is born of corrupt nature is corrupt nature: for “flesh” and “spirit” in the New Testament signify the same as corrupt nature and grace.

As the light that comes from the sun, is of the same nature with that light that is in the sun; and as the water that comes from a fountain, is of the same nature with that which [is] in the fountain; and as the sap that is in a branch, is of that same nature with {that which is in the stock}: so the principle that is in the heart of a saint, is of the same nature with the Spirit of God whence it proceeds.

However, Christians are said to be made partakers of the divine nature,
II Pet. 1:4; and they that are filled with grace, are said to be filled with the fullness of God, Eph. 3:19. So far as they are full of grace, they are full of God, because they are full of that which [is] Godlike.

But we know that the nature of the Spirit of God, is an holy nature. Hence ‘tis called the Holy Spirit; it is a heavenly spirit, a divine spirit, ‘tis a spirit of divine love. Love is especially the nature of the Spirit of God, and therefore ‘tis said, “God is love,” I John 4:16.

And this is here given as a peculiar mark of the Spirit of God’s dwelling in us: “if we dwell in love.”

And so in other parts of the epistles. Love’s dwelling in us, and the Spirit of God dwelling in us, are put for the same thing. I John 4:12-13, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” There you see that God’s love being perfected in us, in one verse, is expressed by God’s spirit dwelling {in us}, in the next; so in vv. 23-24 of the foregoing chapter. So that the principle we are speaking of, is a principle of divine, holy, and heavenly and ardent love.

The Spirit of God is a pure spirit; ‘tis a great enemy to spiritual filthiness, and therefore is often compared to fire. Matt. 3:11, “baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” [It is] called “the spirit of judgment, and spirit of burning,” Is. 4:4; and when poured out at Pentecost.

This also distinguishes this principle from all that natural men experience. The joys and comforts that natural men have, ben’t of this spiritual nature. Whatever joys they have, they savor not the things that be of God. They don’t perceive the excellency and sweetness, and truth and glory of divine things; they savor cruel things, the things that be of man, and their comforts tend to pride and self-dependence and self-exultation. They don’t place their chief happiness in God and holy enjoyments.
And though the Spirit of God may produce effects in natural men, by awakening them and giving them common illuminations; yet he never so operates upon them, as in his operation to communicate himself, or communicate his own nature. He don’t exert his own nature as it were in the acts of their faculties, as he does in the hearts of the godly.

When the Sun of righteousness shines upon the soul of the godly man, he communicates his light and heat so to him, that there is as it were a little sun, a living principle of light and heat kindled up in the soul, that is the exact image of the sun that shines upon it.

And so they behold the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

This glorious sun so touches the heart of a saint with his light and heat, that a divine flame is as it were thereby lit up in the soul, as a candle is lit by touching the fire.

But though the sun, in common illuminations, shines upon the ungodly in a sense, yet ‘tis the sun shines upon a dung hill. It communicates nothing of its brightness and sweet influences to it, but is an occasion of its sending forth the greater stench.

So the illuminations of false Christians commonly, through their corruption, are an occasion of pride and self-confidence, and other things in them that are of a corrupt savor.

I come now to the (3) [Third] thing contained in the description of this oil in their vessels, by which true Christians are distinguished from false, viz., that it is an abiding principle.

It is held forth in this parable that the wise virgins, in that they had oil in their vessels, had something of a more abiding nature than the foolish virgins, had who had nothing but a flame.

They had something that lasted them, and continued while they
themselves slumbered and slept, and stood 'em in stead when they awakened again; whereas all that the foolish virgins had, failed, and came to an end in that time.

So that this is one thing, wherein what true Christians have in their hearts, differs from all that false Christians experience. They may feel religious affections working within them, and may have moving impressions and imaginations; but they have no abiding principle.

Because the godly have an abiding spiritual principle in their hearts, therefore they have spiritual experiences not only once, and then meet with [them] no more, but they have such experiences in a course.

They may have some extraordinary experiences at particular times, that they may have but once in many years, and it may be but once in their lifetime; but yet, though there may not be experiences often renewed in the same degree, or just in the same manner and with the same circumstances, yet they will often have other experiences of the same nature and tendency. There will be that which savors of the same, and tends the same way, and is only a lesser degree of the same light and life.

A truly godly man is not once affected and greatly moved with the goodness and love of God, and the grace of Christ in dying for sinners, or some such thing; but there is an abiding sense and savor and relish he has of such things in his heart.

Though he han’t it always sensibly. There is not always a sweet sense of divine things in action, yet ‘tis apparent that it abides in him in its principle, because on many occasions it is felt.

It is there, and every now [and] then some scripture touches it, and moves it. There is a harmony between the holy Scripture and the gracious soul, which makes one echo to the other.

It is between the Word of God and grace in the soul, as it is between two instruments of music that are set one by another, and set in an exact
concord one with the other: if the one sounds, the other will answer it, 
[and] sound too; if you touch the strings of the one, the strings of the 
other will answer the stroke, and will move and sound without being touched.

Sometimes this principle in the heart is stirred and moved by what is 
delivered in the preaching of the Word, and sometimes by a word that is 
dropped in private conversation. Sometimes ‘tis so, that only the mentioning 
of a single word--as, it may be, the name of God or Christ, or the word 
“redemption” or “holiness,” or the name of some one of the attributes of God 
or graces of his Spirit--will kindle up the flame.

And so the light shines, more or less, every now and then, though it 
may be often greatly clouded. There is a sense of the excellency of divine 
things, a savor and sweet relish of them in a course.

And there is a stated choice of divine things as the most excellent and 
desirable things of’ things, wherein the greatest happiness consists.

And there are soul-breathings and appetites after them, not only once 
or twice, but in a course.

There is a stated adherence of soul to God and Christ as the best good, 
a stated rest of heart in God and Christ, and delight in them, and a delight 
in holiness and appetite after it.

In such ways as these, the principle that is in their hearts appears to 
be an abiding principle. As the apostle John says, “his seed remaineth in 
him.” The seed may indeed be buried up, as a seed is that is sown in the 
ground, though it be a fruitful soil. But though it [be] buried up, yet it 
won’t lie there dead; it will be working and acting, taking root and shooting 
forth sprouts. So the same Apostle says the anointing that Christians have, 
abideth in them, I John 2:27.

Herein true Christians differ greatly from false Christians, who, 
though things that they meet with may make a great noise and have a great 
effect in the affections for the present, yet ben’t continuing.
The following *Reasons* may be given why what true Christians have is abiding, and the other not so:

a. True Christians only receive a deep, real, living conviction of the truth and excellency of divine things. A false Christian may have that [that] may be very affecting and moving, but it is not attended with a real conviction of soul. Things, though they appear to him in an affecting view, yet don’t appear in their evidence, and so coming with that weight, as things of the greatest reality.

A man may be greatly affected in reading of a romance, that he at the same time knows is nothing but a fable. Persons have been oftentimes greatly affected in seeing something acted on a stage play, when they know it was nothing real, and they may be yet more affected when they have some sort of opinion that the thing is true; but they won’t come with that weight, and that deep and abiding effect, as when the things are looked upon as certainly true.

Divine things have the weight of real things with the godly. They are convinced of the truth, and they are also convinced of the superlative excellency of them.

A false Christian may have some notion of the wonderfulness of some things we are told of the gospel, and of a sort of goodness in them; but he don’t see that they are the most excellent things, as a true Christian does.

There is in the heart of a true Christian a deep conviction of their being the best things of all, the sweetest, tending most to make him happy. He don’t only allow it because it is the general voice that it is so, and because he has been taught to say so from his childhood, but is inwardly convinced that it is so; he makes no doubt of it. Hence, he really prefers those things above all.

And this is one reason why what the true Christian has is lasting, and the other not. If a man be greatly affected with an ingenious romance, or
some very moving acts on a stage, this affection won’t last; it will be very transient, and will soon be gone, because the man don’t look upon it real.

And so it will be with all affections that ben’t founded on real conviction. But where there is inward, thorough conviction, and things are beheld as real and certain, there the effect will be deep, and it will hold.

When a man is convicted, the effect reaches the very bottom of his heart, and has an abiding consequence.

That such an inward, real conviction of the truth and divine excellency of spiritual things is peculiar to true Christians, is evident from the Scripture, as I John 5:1, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God”; and ch. 4:15, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God”; and John 17:8, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” I Cor. 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them,” because they are spiritually discerned.

b. Another reason why what the godly have is more abiding than what false Christians have, is that they embrace religion of free choice. False Christians are not religious of free choice; they don’t choose God and Christ, and the ways of holiness, for their own sakes, and of inclination to those things in themselves considered, but always for some by-ends.

Self-love is the highest principle that a false Christian acts from. He is either acted by fear, or from an aim of the praise of men, or from a self-righteous principle, hoping to commend himself to God by his own righteousness, or some way or other, from fame, [or] by respect.

There is some force that is evermore at the bottom; what he does, he don’t do freely, of the free inclination of his heart to God and holiness. There is some force that is at the bottom of those affections that he has;
and therefore, it is no wonder that his religion don’t abide.

What he has, in some way or other, [is] a force against nature, and such religion as that won’t hold but a little while. Nature and inclination is more lasting, and will soon prevail over that force.

He that don’t follow Christ for his own sake, won’t follow him long: for it is found but dull, heavy work to follow him; they will grow weary on’t, and will leave him, and follow other things that suit better with their inclinations. But he whose religion is of free choice and inclination, will be likely to hold. He has not an inclination to forsake it; he has no desire of returning back again; his own free inclinations are to go forward, and therefore won’t be so exposed to be overpowered by temptations to apostasy.

Why should he leave God and holiness, when he loves God and holiness above all, and places his chief happiness in those things; and if he were left to his own mere inclination without any force or by-end, would chose and incline to cleave to God and holiness?

c. A true Christian embraces God’s commands universally, and gives himself up to God without reserve; which a false Christian never does. A true Christian embraces God’s commands universally, i.e., he loves all commands; he loves all parts of holiness. Wherever there is any holiness, there he loves it; whatever is well-pleasing to God, he will love it upon that account, though it may be contrary to his carnal inclinations and corporeal interests.

And he chooses all God’s commands: and there is that disposition in his heart that is a natural, hearty, real consent to keep and observe all commands, not only the easy but the difficult ones. Ps. 119:6, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.”

False Christians, however they are affected, yet they don’t do this. Though their affections may influence them to obey the more easy commands, yet there never was any hearty disposition to comply with the hard and
difficult commands; and hence it is that what they have don’t abide, but when
those hard commands come in the way, then to avoid them, they turn aside to
their crooked ways.

False Christians are [like] Saul, of whom we are told that he slew all
the Amalekites, but only saved the king, the chief of ‘em all, alive. So
false Christians may bridle many of their lusts, but there is some lust that
is chief with ‘em, that is king as it were among them and is dearest to ‘em,
and has a greater government in their hearts than any of the rest that they
save alive.

False Christians, under impressions and affections that they have, may
seem to give themselves to God; but they do it but in part, and keep back a
great part, as Ananias and Sapphira did part of the law [Acts 5].

That is to say, they never were brought to that temper and disposition
towards God, as to be heartily and really disposed, and willing to [be]
wholly of God and wholly for God under all difficulties, and in a time of
trial to be willing to be for God then, and not themselves.

False Christians don’t give themselves to God without reserve, because
they reserve such cases as these, viz., that when they can’t be for God
without suffering much in their own case or interest, at such times and in
such instances they ben’t willing to be for God, but choose to be for
themselves. This is what is meant when it is said that false Christians make
reserves: i.e., they reserve cases of difficulty and keep themselves back,
and won’t let God have their hearts and lives in such cases, though in other
cases they may seem willing to give themselves to God. And hence it is that
their religion don’t hold, but in cases of difficulty they depart from God.

This is what Christ means by counting the cost [Luke 14:28]. Not that
every true Christian does really, actually, when he is converted, think of
all cases of difficulty that can be in his way (though it is a duty for all
to do this, as far as in ‘em lies): but the meaning is that a Christian, when
he is converted, is brought to such a temper and disposition of heart, that
if he should then know and think of every difficulty that is in the way of
his duty throughout his life, he would find a hearty spirit to go through
with them all, rather than to forsake God. And this is the reason that his
religion holds.

But false Christians don’t think about the costs, and therefore, though
they have begun to build, they never finish; they never go through with
religion. A true Christian allows no competitor as rival with Christ in his
heart; he gives his heart to Christ only, and not part to him and part to
another—that is, he has a spirit to give all to Christ.

But false Christians, though they seem to be willing to be Christ’s,
yet ‘tis to be his but in part. They keep a part for mammon, a part for some
dear lusts.

A true Christian has but one God, but a false Christian has a great
many gods. False Christians are like the Samaritans, that were placed in the
land of Israel in the room of the Ten Tribes. They serve the God of Israel,
and worship their own gods into the bargain, II Kgs. 17:33.

A false Christian is like Manasseh, of whom we read, II Chron. 33:7,
that he set up his carved image, the idol that he had made, in the house of
God.

And hence it came to pass that their religion don’t hold, but those
other gods came in the way and drew away the heart from Christ. Christ has
told us we cannot serve God and mammon: [we will] love the one, [and hate the
to Christ; and therefore ‘tis said, Ps. 119:2, “Blessed are they that keep
his testimonies, and seek him with the whole heart.”

How often does Christ instruct us, that we must sell all that we have
for his sake [Matt. 19:21]. And he that has so done, his religion will abide:
for if he has sold all, what has he to draw away his heart from Christ? He
has Christ only, that he has chosen. He that allows some rival with Christ, that rival will steal away the heart from him.

d. [Fourth,] and lastly, under this head. That religion which true Christians have in their hearts is lasting, because ‘tis a-built on a strong foundation, even on Christ Jesus: and this is the highest reason of all. The foregoing reasons must be taken with this, otherwise, if they were taken alone, they would not be sufficient to account for this principle’s being lasting and abiding: but this makes it sure, that it can never utterly fail, and that the gates of hell never can prevail against it.

Herein the experiences of false Christians do greatly differ from those of true Christians. The religious affections of false Christians ben’t built on Christ, neither do they respect him as their foundation and end, as the experiences of true Christians do.

Christ, and the free and saving grace of God in him, and that manifestation that God has made of himself in him, is not the ground of their affections. ‘Tis not a sight of God, as thus discovering himself in Christ, and in the glorious way of salvation by him, that draws forth their affections. Their comforts that they have, ben’t built on Christ; their rejoicing is not a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, but in themselves; their encouragement that they have, is not an apprehension of the free and sovereign grace of God in a glorious, all-sufficient Redeemer, but ‘tis some way or other their own righteousness. And this is the more reason that the religion of true Christians is abiding, and the other not. True Christians’ religion is built on an everlasting rock, and therefore is itself everlasting.

I come now to the

(4) [Fourth] thing contained in the description of this oil, viz., that ‘tis a new nature in the soul. Herein it differs from all that is in false Christians who, whatever impressions and affections they may [have], they are
accompanied with no change of nature, but they pass away and leave the same
nature that there was before. But the experiences of true Christians are
accompanied with a change of nature, since he that is in Christ is said to be
a new creature, II Cor. 5:17. And the principle that is infused into the
heart in this work is called “the new man.” “Having put off the old man with
his deeds, ye have put on the new man,” Eph. 4:22-24. These things hold forth
a new nature in the soul; and more especially does that representation of
conversion, whereby it is called a being “born again.”

Every creature receives the nature that it has by its generation: that
which is generated of a beast is of a beastly nature; and he that is
generated of corrupt man, has a corrupt nature; and he that is generated of
God, has a godlike, a divine, nature: that which “is born of the Spirit is
spirit.”

So that there is not only a new principle in the heart of true
Christians, but that which “is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

What anyone’s nature is known by:

[a.] The things it tends to;
[b.] And the things that agree with it;
[c.] And by the things that it resists and opposes;
[d.] And by the actions and operations that are natural to him.

a. Anyone’s nature is known by the things it tends to. When we see
anything consistently, and from its beginning, seem to have any kind of
tendency and inclination, we say that is its nature. So ‘tis the nature of a
stone to tend downward, [or the] nature of very young plants and animals to
grow: we see they constantly tend to these things. (It is the) nature of an
infant to suck the breast, [and the] nature of the loadstone to incline to
the poles of the earth.

So the new nature appears in its tendencies; and therefore, every godly
man, as he has a holy nature, he has in his nature [an] inclination of heart to God and to Christ, and to spiritual objects. He tends to a spiritual happiness; 'tis the natural tendency and inclination of his heart to grow in grace, and to seek holiness.

The nature of any creature is discovered by its appetite. So is the nature of the soul of a saint: it has holy appetites; it hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

b. It appears in the things that it agrees with, and rests in. So the nature of a fish, is discerned by his being suited in the water; [the] nature of plants, is discerned by the soil they grow and flourish in; the nature of the body, is known by the food that suits it.

So is the new nature of a saint discerned the same way. The soul of a saint rests in God and Christ: he has a sweet complacence and acquiescence in divine things; it has a savor and relish of them, and rejoices in them. He rests in them as his portion, and never is or can be at rest in a state of separation from those things, anymore than Noah’s dove could find rest out of the ark.

c. What the nature is manifest by: [viz.,] the thing that it opposes and resists. So the nature of the body resists that which is contrary to it, and if taken into the stomach, will be in a ruffle and struggle till it is thrown out again.

So the nature of the soul is discerned the same way. And it appears that the saints have a holy nature in their souls, because they have a principle there that maintains a struggle against sin. So that the life of a Christian is a life of struggle against sin. Rom. 7:22-23, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [but] I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.” Gal. 5:17, “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary the one to the other.”
Though a saint has much remaining corruption, yet he is not quiet and at rest with it, {but maintains a struggle against it}. Though he may fall into sin and get into ill ways, yet all that while there will not be ease and quietness, but a resistance and struggle.

d. The nature of anything, is discerned by the acts that are natural to it. So the nature of a tree, is discerned by its bearing such a sort of fruit; the nature of fire, is known by its burning fuel. ‘Tis the nature of a living body to breath; ‘tis the nature of the heart and arteries to beat, by a continual pulsation.

So this way does it appear that the souls of the saints have a new nature: it becomes natural to ‘em to put forth holy acts, acts of love, acts of confidence, and acts of obedience. {In true Christians,} these things ben’t merely forced against nature, as they are in false Christians, but they are natural and true, though they are greatly hindered by another nature that is against ‘em.

In such manifestations of a new nature, true Christians differ from false, [who have] no natural tendency. Though they may have desires {after a new nature, yet they have} no natural desires and appetites. Though [they] may have joy in {holy acts} from newness [and] extraordinariness, or from an apprehension they have of their own interest as concerned in it, yet they have no natural rest and complacency in divine things.

Though [false Christians] may oppose sin out of fear, or for credit, {or some other motive}, yet [they have] no natural struggle against it as uneasy and contrary to the nature of the soul.

Though [they] perform seeming acts of thankfulness when [they think they have] received great mercy, yet ‘tis but a sudden gush of affection from some extraordinary mercy, or extraordinary representations of God’s goodness. {Though they} may seem to trust {God’s commands} and to obey {them}, yet ‘tis all a kind of forced business; there is nothing of any proper nature of the
soul in these things.

I come now to the

(5) [Fifth,] and last thing, in this description of this principle in the hearts of the saints, viz., that it consists in the Christian spirit that they are of. A person is according to the spirit that he is of. Christians are of a Christian spirit, as is implied in Luke 9:55, “Ye know not what spirit ye are of.” Conversion most essentially consists in that, in the renovation of the spirit that persons are of. As appears by Eph. 4:22-23, “That ye put off the old man, which is corrupt.”

Whatever affections and seeming discoveries men may have, they ben’t converted, if the spirit that they are of ben’t changed, and God has not renewed in them a right spirit. This is that principle that we have been hearing of; this is the oil in the vessel, viz., a Christian spirit. Which is so called especially upon two accounts:

a. Because ‘tis a Christ-like spirit. [The] same mind is in the saints, in their measure, that was in Christ Jesus, Philip 1:5. They are of a spirit, like the holy Lamb of God. Now we know that the spirit of Christ was a humble, meek and lowly spirit, a spirit of love, a' pliant, submissive and heavenly spirit.

Christians are, in a measure, of the same spirit, because they are in him as his members; and the members must, of necessity, partake of the spirit of the head. Christians must be of the same spirit with Christ, because the grace they have is “a partaking of his fullness, and grace for grace,” John 1:16. If one writes exactly after another’s copy, we should express that he writes after him. Where it is said, “grace for grace,” ‘tis meant grace answerable to grace. So we are said to be renewed “after the image” of Christ. Col. 3:10, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”; together with vv. 12-13, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies,
kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." “Beholding as in a glass the glory [of the Lord,” II Cor. 3:18]. Christ is “born in the soul,” Gal. 4:19.

All is wrought by the Spirit of God, as the Spirit of Christ. And the consequence is, that it works the same temper that was in Christ. We are told what kind of temper this [is that] it works in them. Gal. 5:22, etc., “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”; and Eph. 5[:9], “For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness, and truth.” Jas. 3:17, “But the wisdom that is from above.” And I Cor. 13, at the beginning, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

b. A Christian spirit is such a spirit as the Christian revelation does especially hold forth obligations to.

The Christian revelation declares what condescension {true Christians are obliged to, because of}, how Christ abased {himself for them}. This therefore especially obliges to a lowly, humble spirit. {The Christian revelation} reveals, above all things, the dreadful vileness of sin, {as seen} in the death of Christ. {The Christian revelation} reveals a contrite spirit.


[The Christian revelation declares the] marvelous love of God the Father {through the Spirit} of Christ. [It is a spirit of] love and charity. John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Now herein
true Christians differ from false: for the false Christians may have illumination, {they may have} great joys {and other} things that greatly move [them, but] they don’t make this excellent change in the spirit of their minds. {They are} followed with no such amiable, Christ-like spirit.

Very commonly [such experiences] make an alteration for the worse in their spirit. [They become] more proud, more assuming, more self-sufficient. A very unlovely spirit seems to be prevalent in, and is dreadfully strengthened and established by, their experiences and hopes and high thoughts they have of themselves. So it was in the Pharisees. O what a difference was there in spirit and temper between those proud and haughty and assuming Pharisees, and the poor, contrite, humble, meek followers of Jesus, that we have an account of [Luke 6:20]. How exceeding different is the temper of ‘em from the others. But here, some may be ready to

_Inquire_, How this may be said to be the spirit that every true Christian is of? For all allow, that there is a great deal of a contrary spirit in {true Christians}; and we often hear that there is but little grace and a great deal of corruption: and how can it properly be said that this is the spirit that they are of, more than the contrary is the spirit that they are of, unless this spirit predominates?

I answer: Though there be abundance of corruption, and more corruption even in the godly, yet this spirit predominates in them, in the following respects:

(a) It predominates in the judgment and esteem of the soul. Grace has got into the throne, as it rules in the understanding and judgment, and highest faculties of the soul, in the esteem of the heart of a godly man.

He is convinced of its excellency, he prizes it above all; and he has a mean opinion of the contrary spirit, and that, not only in others, but in himself. He looks upon [it] as [a] dishonorable and hateful spirit.

Herein differs {the true and false Christian}. An ungodly man never
sees, and so is never really convinced of the excellency {of this spirit}. They have a mind void of judgment. {This spirit} don’t rule in their esteem; {they} don’t really prize it above all.

(b) It predominates in their stated choice of the soul. {The heart} necessarily follows the esteem of the practical understanding. This spirit is chosen. The heart, in its real choice, follows after such a spirit, whereby it may be conformed to Christ.

(c) It predominates with respect to the stated allowance of the soul. Though contrary {to a natural principle, it is} not allowed {to predominate}, any more than a man allows an enemy that he is at war against.

(d) By the grace of God, this spirit is wont finally [to] get the victory, and triumphs over the contrary. If in a day of temptation another spirit seems to prevail, {this spirit is} yet not at rest, {treats temptation} as [a] struggle {to maintain}, and at last, get the victory. So thus not by [their] own strength, but God’s grace, II Cor 2:14, [they] always triumph in Christ Jesus.

So that, not withstanding all the remains of a contrary spirit, this may be said to be the spirit that they are of.

It predominating in the forementioned respects, it properly denominates the man. So that every true Christian is in Scripture called one that is “poor in spirit,” Matt. 5:3. All true Christians [are] called “the humble.” Ps. 34:2, “The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.” [True Christians are] all called merciful men. Is. 57:1, “The righteous perisheth.” {True Christians are all called} meek. Is. 11:4, “He shall reprove with equity for the meek and poor of the earth.”

Thus I have described that holy principle, that is in the hearts of true Christians: and this is the oil in the vessel. This principle that has been described today, is the great and most essential difference between true and false Christians, wherein they always differ. Let there be what
appearances soever of religion in false Christians, they always want this.

Here is the difference between those that have oil, and those that have lamps only.
Notes

1 JE’s shorthand note: “preached the second time.”
2 JE’s shorthand notations indicate that he preached part of this sermon a second time.
3 JE deletes: “an abiding principle in the heart, that may be said to be a new nature in the soul, consisting in the Christian and gracious spirit that they are of.” On oil as a type of grace, see the list of “Scriptures” in “Images of Divine Things,” nos. 17 and 30, WJE 11:132, 133.
5 MS: “because spirit not by measure.”
6 MS: “it is.”
7 MS: “as.”
8 MS: “an.”