

only the grounds on which the visionary and the enthusiast rest their belief that they are united to the saviour. And there is often too much reason to suspect that in them there is nothing more than the reveries of a heated imagination, who spring up with every flush of animal spirits, and vanish with every fit of melancholy. We are sure that the spirit does witness with the spirits of believers that they are the children of God, and fills them with joy and peace in believing. But this joy and peace, wherever they are well-founded, must proceed for a rational and sober view of our own character, as corresponding to that we know for scripture, the Holy Spirit forms in all those who are genuine christians. Since then the Holy Spirit effects a *gracious change* on the minds and characters of those who truly believe all who have experienced this *change*, must be conscious of it; and, without any supposed and inexplicable whispers and suggestions, able to recognise it as a *proof* of their saving interest in Christ. As this however is too general and indefinite a manner of describing the nature of this inward witness, we shall point out *some of the features of that character* which the Holy Ghost forms in believers, and by which when taken together, those who possess them may decide that they are really and truly united to Christ.

3. Then if you believe in the Son and possess the believer's character, *you will entertain a strong conviction of the evil and abominable nature of sin and of your own personal guilt and worthlessness*. In what respects do you think that sin is an evil and abominable thing? If you imagine that it is so only on account of its evil consequences to yourselves personally, then you have no right conception of its abominable nature; for your conception of its evil arises entirely from your own selfishness, and is nothing more than what the blindest and most hardened sinners may, and often do experience. But if you really really feel and believe that sin is intrinsically evil in itself, dishonouring to God against whom it is committed and degrading to yourselves as rational and immortal creatures,—and that because it is the violation of the holy law of God, and a breach of all the obligations you are under to reverence and love and serve him,—if such, ~~you may be~~

your conviction of the evil of sin, and of your own personal guilt and worthlessness, then you may conclude that you have acquired, in part at least, the disposition and character of those who “believe in the Son of God.” But you must not stop here if you wish to obtain a full and conclusive proof that you believe in Christ.

4. Then if you believe in the Son of God, and possess the believer's character, *you will also entertain a strong conviction of your own helplessness, and renounce all dependence on your own merits*. There are many who have strong convictions of sin, but who, not being fully awakened to a sense of their own utter helplessness, waste their time, and weary themselves in fruitless and impotent attempts to work out a justifying righteousness of their own. Those who have been brought to this stage, may be said to be not far from the kingdom of heaven. But until they have been led further than this,—until they have been made sensible of their own utter helplessness and induced to look for pardon through the merits of the Saviour alone, they cannot say, with any degree of truth, that they believe in Christ. Conversion is sometimes sudden as in the case of Paul, and the circumstances attending it so remarkable as to be indelibly impressed upon the mind. But it is often effected gradually, and by such imperceptible degrees, and to render it impossible to assign the precise time when a saving change takes place.” Yet if you can say, this much I know that whereas I was once insensible to the evil of sin, and unconcerned about futurity, I have now become awakened and alive to both;—this much I know that whereas I once thought I might obtain the pardon of sin through my own merits, I now see that I am utterly lost and undone for anything I can do to help myself, and I earnestly desire to trust for forgiveness and acceptance with God to the merits of Christ alone. If these be your convictions and resolutions, although all convictions and resolutions are not conversions, then you have *some* reason to conclude that you really “believe in the Son of God.” But there are yet some other marks, by which you may be enabled to decide, with greater precision and certainty, whether your faith is right and genuine.